# ·ULSTER BIOGRAPHIES·

## RELATING CHIEFLY

## TO THE

# ·REBELLION OF 1798·

BY

W. T. LATIMER, B.A.

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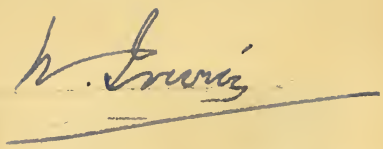

# Ulster Biographies,

## Relating Chiefly

TO THE

# Rebellion of 1798.

CHURCH OF THE VOLUNTEERS, DUNGANNON.

# ULSTER BIOGRAPHIES,

## Relating Chiefly

TO THE

# Rebellion of 1798.

BY

**W. T. LATIMER, B.A.,**

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# TO THE READER.

THE following biographies have already appeared in the columns of various Ulster newspapers. They are now revised, enlarged, and offered to the public in a more permanent form.

It is certain that great civil and religious oppression existed in Ireland during the last century; but we must remember that measures of reform have now been granted more radical than Porter was hanged for demanding. From this fact a strong argument may be drawn for maintaining the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament by which these grievances have been removed.

The Irish people have no longer to support a Church to which they do not belong; rents are no longer fixed by the landlords themselves, and justice is no longer administered by the "Agent" and the Rector, but by impartial tribunals.

While I condemn the system of landlordism that prevailed in the past, I have no intention of making any attack on the present landlords. Almost all the conditions of their ownership have been so much modified that very little of what applied to their political position in 1798, has any reference to it now.

My own experience of modern landlordism has been derived chiefly from the management of the estates of the

Earl of Erne, the Earl of Belmore, and of Mr. James Bruce, D.L.; and inasmuch as I have denounced the abuses of the past, I think it only right to say, with regard to these gentlemen, that their justice and kindness to their tenants is an example for other Irish landowners.

The Land Acts, which have not gone far enough to enable the tenants to live and thrive in the altered conditions of agriculture, have pressed very heavily on many landowners. I have often wondered why a Government which spends such vast sums on useless armaments, will not devise and carry out a scheme of land purchase that would still further reduce the yearly payments of farmers, and give landlords a reasonable compensation for their losses.

It may be thought strange that I so often refer to the religion of those whose actions I narrate; but in Ireland—especially in Ulster—a man's religion determines so many of his social and political relations that it must be taken into account in order to estimate the motives by which he has been guided.

In the districts of Antrim and Down that "turned out," in the year 1798, the great majority of the people were Presbyterians. It was with them the movement began before it was taken up by the Roman Catholics; and, therefore, in giving an account of the causes from which it sprang, it is absolutely necessary to deal with the misgovernment and persecution which drove so many of these loyal Presbyterians into rebellion.

EGLISH, DUNGANNON, 1*st June*, 1897.

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# Ulster Biographies of 1798.

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## HENRY JOY M'CRACKEN.

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HENRY JOY M'CRACKEN was born in High Street, Belfast, on the 31st of August, 1767. His father, John M'Cracken, was captain and part owner of a vessel that traded between Belfast and the West Indies. He was descended from a Presbyterian family that had settled at Hillhall, near Lisburn, when driven from Scotland by Prelatic persecution. The mother of Captain M'Cracken was so strict a Presbyterian that, on Christmas Day, she would sit conspicuously at her spinning wheel to show that she attached no idea of sanctity to holidays of human appointment. Her son, the captain, was, like his mother, a firm Presbyterian; and so far did he carry his principles of morality, that he never engaged in smuggling operations, although almost every other captain in the same trade made at least £200 a year by carrying contraband commodities. His wife was Ann Joy, daughter of Francis Joy, who, on the 1st of September, 1737, estab-

lished the *Belfast News-Letter*, the third newspaper published in Ireland. The family of Joy, or Joyeuse, were of Huguenot descent, having fled from France rather than sacrifice their Presbyterian faith.

Mrs. M'Cracken had principles as high and courage as great as any of her ancestors. In 1763 she accompanied her husband to Liverpool, where he went to superintend the building of a new vessel. Returning before him, the ship in which she sailed was wrecked on the South Rock, near Ballywalter. All on board were saved; but Mrs. M'Cracken had to wade a long distance through the shallow water before reaching the shore. However, she not only made good her escape, but carried safely in her pocket 200 guineas that she was bringing from England.

This worthy couple had a large family. There lived to grow up four sons—Francis, William, Henry Joy, and John, and two daughters—Margaret and Mary Anne. A very interesting sketch of the latter is contained in Mr. R. M. Young's "Old Belfast." Henry's childhood was spent in a house nearly opposite Bridge Street; afterwards the family removed to Rosemary Street. He grew rapidly to manhood, was five feet eleven inches high, was well formed, active, and courageous. His qualities of activity and courage were often exhibited at the fires which were then common among the thatch-covered houses of Belfast. But, above all, he had the high moral qualities of his race, was a firm Presbyterian, assisted in establishing the first Sunday-school formed in Belfast, and promoted a circulating library, from which the middle and lower classes could borrow books on reasonable terms. As it was intended by his parents that Henry should learn the linen business, he was taught to weave. When about eighteen years of age, he joined a cotton manufactory

which his uncle Robert had previously established, and in which Captain M'Cracken, his father, was a partner. After some time, he went to reside at the Falls, to be near his business; but in 1795, he returned home, as a result of his father withdrawing from the partnership.

Even before this period, Henry Joy M'Cracken had begun that political career which brought him to an early grave. Kind-hearted and unselfish, he strongly sympathized with his fellow-countrymen in the local oppression they endured from landlords and rectors, and the general oppression they suffered from the Government. Doubtless there was a legal limit to the rapacity of the rector; but there was none to the tyranny of the landlord. He owned the property created by the labour of his tenant. He could do with it as he wished; and he often used his power to compel Presbyterians to leave the Church of their fathers and join the Church of their alien oppressors.

Henry M'Cracken belonged to a class then very small, who were not so much affected by the prevailing tyranny as most other classes of the community. Engaged in mercantile pursuits, he was free from landlord oppression; and living in a town, he was able to enjoy more religious freedom. But M'Cracken was unselfish and courageous. His unselfishness caused him to feel for others, and his courage drove him into action. By father and by mother, he belonged to a race who had fought for freedom, and he, too, determined to try to stem the tide of tyranny. In 1790, M'Cracken became acquainted with Thomas Russell, and Russell won the heart and became the affianced lover of Mary Anne M'Cracken. But this union was never to be consummated, as Miss M'Cracken's lover was claimed by the scaffold.

With M'Cracken and Russell were associated Theobald

Wolfe Tone and several other patriots. Among these the most prominent was Samuel Neilson, son of the Presbyterian clergyman of Ballyroney. It was then plain to be seen that the Episcopal aristocracy were trying to prevent Parliamentary reform by raising the animosity of Protestant farmers against their Roman Catholic fellow-sufferers, in order to ward it off from themselves; while at the same time they excited the Catholics against their Protestant neighbours. We have a trustworthy witness to the truth of this in the Rev. Dr. Campbell, who states that the authorities went so far as to even encourage the Defenders, in order to strengthen the animosity of religious rivals in the North.

Neilson now formed the idea of joining his countrymen, both Protestant and Catholic, into one grand confederacy of United Irishmen, who, instead of injuring one another, might combine to overthrow the enemies of their country.

The first object of the association was to obtain Parliamentary reform, and thus prevent a few hundred Episcopal landlords from ruling an entire nation. It should never be forgotten that, at first, the United Irish Society was a lawful association, established for accomplishing a most desirable object. Its founder was Neilson, but Henry Joy M'Cracken laboured late and early with all the energy of his enthusiastic nature to promote its interests, although he did not come forward as a leader, or seek to obtain any position of honour in the Society he was so instrumental in establishing.

But the power of the aristocracy was too strong for even a united nation. The landlords would not bestow away the privileges and power they possessed. Before long, the leaders of the United Irishmen became discouraged at their want of speedy success in procuring Parliamentary reform by legitimate agitation, and, most unfortunately, began to aim at

setting up a Republic, after the example of the French. Accordingly, the Society was remodelled, and in March, 1795, M'Cracken took the test of the new organization. Henceforth he devoted much of his time and energy to advocate its principles and forward its interests.

At the same period there existed another Society, to which we have already alluded, whose members were termed Defenders. They were all Roman Catholics, and their object was to "defend" the rights of their class and their creed when attacked. Among the more prominent leaders of this Society in the North were Charles Teeling, his brother-in-law, Magennis, and A. Lowry. Each of these had two delegates; from one of them M'Cracken received a command, and before long he had a guiding influence over about 7,000 members of this Roman Catholic organization. In the County of Armagh, M'Cracken often gave assistance to the people whose houses had been wrecked by the Peep-o'-Day Boys, and procured them legal advice. It seems that in some instances his uncle, Counsellor Joy, guaranteed the payment of law expenses.

Meanwhile the tyranny of the Government grew greater. Presbyterians who were suspected of dissatisfaction had often to bear most merciless punishments. An Insurrection Act was passed, which empowered the magistrates in any county to proclaim it out of the King's peace, and to subject the unoffending inhabitants to all the horrors of military law, which meant punishment without trial and without redress. The province was filled with troops from England. Military officers were put into the Commission of the Peace, and soon proved themselves the servile tools of tyranny. In the words of Dr. Campbell, then leader of the Synod of Ulster, and a gentleman of high culture and of undoubted loyalty, these

officers, "Debased the name of soldiers; they became assassins and executioners, but then they were legal assassins, expert in inflicting torture, as if they had been 'hackneyed' in the office of the inquisition. . . . . Nothing was heard of but imprisonment, exile, torture, and death." The only soldiers who showed any sympathy with the people were a few Presbyterian companies from Scotland. To crown all, a Bill of indemnity was passed by the Parliament, which protected magistrates in their guilt, by securing them from punishment for the illegal tortures that they inflicted. The unfortunate Defenders, who had been at first encouraged by the authorities in order to strengthen the religious animosities of the people, were now given up to destruction. Their houses were burned, their property destroyed, and thousands of them driven from the County Armagh to Connaught, or wherever they could find a refuge.

Innocent Presbyterian farmers, whose only crime was that they had complained of their inability to pay impossible rents and oppressive tithes, had to endure the agonies of the burning pitch cap, or were hanged until almost suffocated, or flogged with such unrelenting severity that many of them died in consequence of the punishment they received.

Thus, by a system of unrelenting cruelty, the loyal Presbyterian farmers of Ulster were driven to the madness that arose from despair. The Government desired a rebellion, in order that they might have an excuse for inflicting even more severe punishment; and to rebellion the people were accordingly driven, although these loyal Presbyterians had hitherto considered themselves the guardians of the Constitution.

The enthusiastic, unselfish, and sympathetic nature of Henry J. M'Cracken caused him to feel for the people in

their sufferings, and to sacrifice his life in a vain attempt to bring the serfs of Ulster into a position of freedom. He knew that the only chance of success lay in the union of all Irishmen. For this union he laboured with all his power; and, before long, a large body of the Roman Catholic Defenders had cast their lot with the United Irishmen, who were generally Presbyterians, and had become part of the organization. In 1795, Theobald Wolfe Tone paid another visit to Belfast, and with M'Cracken, Simms, Russell, and Neilson, went to M'Art's Fort, on the top of Cave Hill, and there took a solemn obligation never to desist in their efforts until they had secured the independence of Ireland. Meanwhile Samuel Neilson, with his newspaper, the *Northern Star*, had lashed the oppressors of the people into perfect madness. But at last the *Star* was suppressed, and the proprietor was, for a long period, kept in prison without trial. This was the course generally adopted when evidence could not be secured, and sometimes there was great difficulty in finding such evidence as would satisfy even a packed jury. For example, a poor weaver named James Hope was offered £500, in case he would bear witness against Neilson, Russell, and M'Cracken; but he refused the offer with indignation. Hence it came to pass that so much use was made of military tribunals during this unfortunate rebellion—before *them* there was no trouble in securing a conviction.

On the 10th October, 1796, M'Cracken was arrested. He was sent to Dublin by a military escort. On the way he gained such favour with the soldiers that he was offered a chance of escaping, but he took no advantage of the opportunity. On his arrival in Dublin he was committed to Newgate Prison. Afterwards he was removed to Kilmainham, where for a time he had as his fellow-prisoner his own

brother William, lately arrested on a similar charge. Here he was denied the use of writing materials; but, in spite of every precaution, he succeeded in corresponding regularly with his friends. The following extracts from a few of his letters vividly describe his life in prison:—"We contrive to live very comfortably, cooking day about. Some of us are very good at it, and others very middling. The day before yesterday we saw from our windows two militiamen conducted to the park by the military in this neighbourhood, and there shot for being United Irishmen. . . . Since I came to this part of the house, William got permission to come to see me for a very few minutes. . . . At present [July, 1797], there is very little prospect of our getting out, unless some underhand work that is going on may alter the appearance. . . . Yesterday [18th November] two men were executed in front of the jail for robbing the mail in June last. They died with the greatest fortitude. It gives me a sort of carelessness about death to see such sights."

Among the letters which he succeeded in receiving was one from his brother John, which related to the barbarities committed by the yeomen, or other Government officials, on people suspected of connection with the United Irishmen. "The practice among them is to hang a man up by the heels with a rope full of twist, by which means the sufferer whirls round like a bird roasting at the fire, during which he is lashed with belts, &c., to make him tell where he has concealed arms. Last week at a place near Dungannon, a young man being used in this manner, called to his father for assistance, who, being inflamed at the sight, struck one of the party a desperate blow with his turf spade; but, alas! his life paid the forfeit of his rashness, his entrails were torn out and exposed on a thorn bush."

Meanwhile, Henry J. M'Cracken's health began to fail. Many friends interested themselves in his behalf, and at last, in September, 1797, he and his brother William were admitted to bail—Bernard Coil becoming security for Henry, and Counsellor Joy for William.

Henry's health was now so much broken down that for a time he was unable to attend to business. But the change from confinement to liberty soon brought renewed strength. In February, 1798, he visited Dublin to see some of the revolutionary leaders and to arrange for an insurrection. M'Cracken considered this policy the best, although desperate, for he and his friends thought "they would much rather be in the field like men than be hunted like wild beasts, and see their friends carried off to jail, their houses ransacked, and the . . . yeomen riding roughshod over them day by day.

He now got a friendly hint from his cousin, Counsellor Joy's sister, that it would be better for him to leave Belfast. Acting on the hint, he set out immediately. As he passed through Hercules Street on his way, he was attacked by a number of armed yeomen; but, with the assistance of a butcher's wife who drew her knife in his defence, he succeeded in making good his escape from the town, but he still kept in the neighbourhood. Having ascertained that, on the 21st of May, nearly all the military officers stationed in Belfast would be present at a musical promenade, he proposed to the executive of the United Irishmen to carry them off as prisoners that they might be retained as hostages. But cowardly counsels prevailed, and the proposal was rejected.

There is no doubt whatever that the Protestant United Irishmen of Ulster were by far the most formidable body with which the Government had to deal. They were numer-

ous, more intelligent, and better organized than their brethren in any other province. Yet, after all, their armaments were miserable when we consider the enemy with whom they had to contend. County Antrim had over 26,000 men enrolled, of whom less than 4,000 possessed muskets. Now, Antrim was one of the best armed counties in Ireland; still, if even a similar proportion of the 500,000 United Irishmen enrolled throughout the kingdom, had possessed firearms, it must be admitted that they had but slender means of overthrowing the army of Great Britain.

An adjutant-general was appointed in each county, and under him were a number of colonels. In Antrim, the colonels held a meeting about the beginning of June, and pressed the General, Robert Simms, to take the field; but he opposed the resolution, and resigned his command. M'Cracken was soon afterwards appointed in his stead, and he became, not only adjutant-general for Antrim, but commander-in-chief of the United Irish Army of the North. Only a few days remained in which he could plan his movements and arrange his troops. But, with skill and activity that would have done honour to one who had been trained in actual warfare, he planned for attacks to be made simultaneously on Randalstown, Ballynahinch, Saintfield, Newtownards, and Portaferry. If Down and Antrim were gained, he could communicate with the Southern insurgents. But no sooner was the plan formed and the orders issued, than General Nugent received full particulars from a traitor, and arranged his defence accordingly.

M'Cracken determined to make his chief attack on the town of Antrim, and there he commanded in person. He expected 21,000 men to take the field, of whom 7,000 were Defenders, and, therefore, Roman Catholic in religion. The

vast majority of the others were Presbyterians. On the day preceding the attack he issued the following proclamation:— "To-morrow we march on Antrim—drive the garrison of Randalstown before you, and haste to form a junction with the commander-in-chief.—HENRY JOY M'CRACKEN. 1st year of liberty, 6th June, 1798." Next day M'Cracken advanced to attack Antrim with a force which Musgrave estimated at 4,000 men, but which others believe did not exceed 500 or 600 at the first onset. He formed his men into three divisions: First came the musketeers, then the pikemen, and last of all a small party with two brass field-pieces, that had long been concealed in Templepatrick Meeting-house, and had formerly belonged to the Belfast Volunteers.

When the United Irishmen arrived within sight of the town, they beheld in flames several of the houses that had been set on fire by the British troops. M'Cracken then halted his forces, and addressed them with great power and eloquence. To this appeal they responded with exulting shouts, desiring to be led to death or liberty. Then they marched on in perfect order. A man named Harvey struck up the Marseillaise Hymn, but Jemmie Hope began a lively Irish air, which was soon taken up by the whole army. Thus they moved onward in high spirits, while green banners waved from every division. M'Cracken himself, tall and fair, dressed in a uniform of green and white, led the way with sword in hand. Meanwhile, the Royal troops within had begun to receive reinforcements from Blaris camp. They were even then nearly as numerous as M'Cracken's raw recruits, were better armed, and had the advantage of acting on the defensive.

Antrim consisted chiefly of one long street, which widened a little into a square at the west end, and then

stopped short at a wall, behind which was Lord Massereene's demesne and castle. Just there, Bow Lane branched off to the right, while to the left, was a path down to the river. If one entered the town by the Belfast road at the other end, as M'Cracken did, he would pass the meeting-house on his right, and then Patie's Lane, which branched off in the direction of Ballymena. On the left, was the Episcopal Church, and then, somewhat further on, the road that led to the Massereene Bridge, which spans the Sixmilewater, a small river that runs nearly parallel with the houses on the south side of the street.

M'Cracken had planned to attack the town from four different directions by four different columns, three of which were to arrive at half-past two o'clock, and the fourth, from Randalstown, to enter by Bow Lane, a few minutes afterwards.

The Royal infantry and yeomen occupied a strong position in front of the castle wall, facing the long street which I have described. The cavalry were stationed behind the walls that surrounded the Episcopal place of worship. The cannon, just then coming in over the Massereene Bridge, protected by Colonel Lumley and a party of dragoons, arrived as M'Cracken entered the town by the Belfast Road. On the rebel general's arrival he was joined by the second column, which came by the way leading from Carrickfergus. Thus reinforced, he marched boldly into the town, and repulsed a charge of the cavalry, by whom he was, at first, opposed. But now, the Royal Artillery opened fire, and many of the attacking rebels were killed. Still M'Cracken pressed onwards in the face of the storm of grape. His musketeers fired rapidly at the defending soldiers, and, being good marksmen, killed a great number. Meanwhile, concealed

behind the musketeers, one of his six-pounders was got ready on an extemporized carriage. Then the musketeers turned aside, and fire was opened from the gun, under direction of a man named James Burns, who had served in the artillery, and whose life is described in Mr. R. M. Young's interesting volume on this rebellion. Two discharges of grape shot laid many of the Royal troops in the dust; but, at the third discharge, the gun recoiled from its carriage, and it was useless afterwards.

Now the Irish pikemen rushed forward to capture the enemies' guns, but they were met by a murderous volley of grape shot. Colonel Lumley several times charged the Irish pikemen, but every charge was repulsed. M'Cracken pressed onwards, and in spite of all opposition, gained the churchyard, where he unfurled his banner. Then he sent a large body of pikemen across the fields to the right, behind the houses, to get into Bow Lane and attack the infantry at the Castle wall. Lumley now charged down the street, but a terrible volley from the Irish musketeers in the churchyard emptied many a saddle, and the Colonel was wounded himself. Meanwhile M'Cracken's pikemen pressed onwards. The soldiers and yeomen were overpowered, and retreated inside the Massereene demesne. The horse of Lumley were driven down to the river, which they crossed in flight, leaving the guns in possession of the rebels. One hour after M'Cracken attacked Antrim he was master of the town, and the victory seemed to be won.

The attack on Antrim was purposely made upon a day when M'Cracken expected a large number of magistrates to be assembled in the town, in order to arrange for quartering the troops, and to declare that part of the country out of the King's peace. But, in consequence of information received,

almost all these gentlemen kept away. Lord O'Neill, however, chanced to enter the place shortly before the attack was made; and, together with Mr. Macartney, the Episcopal pastor of the parish, remained with the dragoons during the action. As the cavalry retreated, his Lordship received a mortal wound from a pikeman at whom he fired one of his pistols; but Mr. Macartney succeeded in escaping.

Meanwhile the infantry, driven from before the castle wall, had taken up their position on the terrace behind. From this place of advantage they kept up a murderous fire, and the insurgents were forced to leave the cannon which they had captured. M'Cracken saw that the infantry must be dislodged at all hazards. Leaving James Hope in the churchyard with his "Spartan Band," he led a party to scale the castle wall and take the soldiers and the yeomen in the rear. Just then he saw a division of United Irishmen, 500 strong, marching in from Randalstown, which they had captured in obedience to M'Cracken's orders. This detachment was led by Samuel Orr, a brother of the martyred William Orr, whose name was long a watchword with the Ulster patriots. As this division approached Bow Lane, they saw the Royal cavalry retreat, and ignorantly concluded that they were making a charge. Hesitating for a moment, their hesitancy was turned into a panic when they saw a number of insurgents from the town coming towards them as if in flight. Concluding that their friends were defeated, they turned and fled themselves. M'Cracken shouted after the fugitives at the top of his voice, but he was unable to make them understand. Finding that he could not prevent their flight, he ordered the party he was leading to scale the wall and dislodge the infantry. But the fire from behind the enemies' place of vantage had slain many, and his men

were too much frightened by the death of their companions, and by the flight of Orr's detachment, to follow their dauntless leader. In despair, M'Cracken rushed forward himself, as if he were going to charge the enemy alone; but two of his pikemen, crossing their weapons before him, tripped him in the dust. Finding now that none had courage to follow him, he most reluctantly joined his friends in their retreat.

Meanwhile reinforcements, superior in numbers to the entire rebel army, had arrived under Clavering and Durham, from Blaris camp and from Belfast. When Jemmie Hope saw a large detachment of these troops marching in by the Belfast road, he led his men boldly forward, as if he were going to attack them in front; and they, not knowing how matters stood in the town, paused in their course. Then Hope marched backward through Antrim, under fire from the yeomen secure behind the fatal wall, and made good his escape to Donegore.

The battle was now won by the Royal troops, but at the expense of many killed and wounded. Doubtless, it is difficult to arrive at the exact truth in this respect, as different accounts give very different estimates. Mr. Macartney, for example, stated that the Royal troops lost but fifty, killed and wounded, while the rebels lost 300; but M'Cracken himself asserted that only a few of the people fell—not one for every ten of their enemies. Undaunted by this defeat, M'Cracken collected the remains of his army at Donegore, and determined to attack the Royal troops at Ballymena. But the insurgents, baffled by defeat, dispersed so rapidly that very soon he could count only about a hundred followers. With these he took up a position on Slemish mountain, on the south side of which he opened a spring well with the point of his sword. There he was very

quickly surrounded by Colonel Clavering with a force greatly superior. But the Colonel feared to attack the brave men whom he had driven to stand at bay, and he contented himself with offering a reward of £100 for each of four leaders, three of whom were named Orr, and the fourth Robert Johnston. Strange to say, M'Cracken was not included. Should these be given up, a full pardon was promised to their followers. But the insurgents spurned the offer, proclaimed Clavering a rebel, and offered £400 for his capture. Then this gallant officer of his Majesty threatened to burn all the dwellings in the neighbourhood, and M'Cracken, to prevent the suffering of innocent peasants, retired with a few faithful followers to Little Collon. There, by marching backwards and forwards from point to point, and exhibiting part of their clothing on poles, they conveyed the impression that they were still a considerable number, and they were not attacked by the pursuing soldiers.

When they, as has been stated, heard the guns firing at Ballynahinch, M'Cracken and seven of his most determined supporters marched in that direction. Disarming a guard at Ballyclare, they crossed the country to Divis. Learning there that Monro had been defeated, they resolved to escape to Wexford. But, before they had an opportunity of leaving, Miss M'Cracken and her sister-in-law, notwithstanding the great toil and danger, walked from Belfast to their hiding place, and gave them information to the effect that General Nugent had learned their intention of joining the Wexford rebels. M'Cracken now took refuge in the house of David Bodel a labourer or game keeper, who resided on the Belfast side of Cave Hill, and whose daughter he would have married had he lived. All day he lay concealed in the thick brushwood, but at night lodged in Bodel's cottage near the

Volunteer Well. His friends succeeded in obtaining for him a pass made out in another name, and arranged with the captain of a foreign vessel to receive him as a passenger. When all was ready, he proceeded towards Larne, accompanied by John Query and Gawin Watt. As they crossed the commons of Carrickfergus, they met four yeomen, one of whom named Niblock had been a pedlar, and knew M'Cracken. On his information the fugitives were arrested. Soon afterwards, they all stopped for a short time on the road, and Watt, without being seen, took the priming out of one of the yeomen's guns, and told M'Cracken to fly for his life. But he refused, as he thought it might expose his friends to additional danger. He had, however, an acknowledgment for £30 in his pocket, which was as good as money, and he offered this to the yeomen for permission to escape. Niblock refused the offer, but another, named M'Gilpin, was for accepting it, and an arrangement was almost effected when they stopped at a public-house. This opportunity was taken advantage of, by one of the yeomen, who slipped out and brought in an officer to secure the prisoners.

Miss M'Cracken and her father, on hearing of Henry's arrest, set out for Carrickfergus, and with difficulty obtained permission to see him. On the 16th of July he was brought to Belfast, and his two sisters went immediately to Colonel Durham to ask permission to visit their brother, but this polite officer closed his hall door against them with great violence. Colonel Barber was, however, more humane, for he at once granted these ladies the permission desired, and sent an officer to escort them to the prisoner.

Next morning, the 17th of July, the trial took place in the Exchange, under the presidency of Colonel Montgomery. Miss M'Cracken, ever faithful to her beloved brother, sat

near the table. Two witnesses, whose names were John Minnis and James Beck, appeared to give testimony against him. James Hope states that neither had any previous knowledge of the prisoner's appearance, but that an officer pointed him out to them while they stood at a window looking into the yard where he was walking, and told them of a mark on his throat.

Just before the trial began, M'Cracken's father was called aside by Pollock, the Crown prosecutor, and told that there was evidence enough to convict his son, but that his life would be saved if he would divulge the name of the person who had been first appointed to command the rebels in Antrim, and for whom he had acted. The old man replied that he would rather see his son die than do such a dishonourable action. Then Pollock called Henry to the conference; but when he heard the terms, he said, " Farewell, father," and turned away. He received a similar offer from Major Fox, but he refused it with indignation, stating that he wondered how the major could suppose him to be such a villain. Thus M'Cracken preferred to die a patriot rather than live an informer. When the evidence was heard, Miss M'Cracken went to the table herself, pointed out all that had been sworn which seemed unlike the truth, and expressed the hope that the Court would not consider the testimony sufficient to take away life, as the character of one witness had been proven unworthy of belief. But all was in vain. M'Cracken said to his sister that she must be prepared for his conviction ; and so it was. He was declared guilty, and sentenced to be hanged.

Before the verdict was given, Miss M'Cracken, anticipating the result, hastened home with the sad tidings. Her mother went immediately to General Nugent, thinking that his influence might be secured to get her son's sentence

commuted to banishment, but the General refused an interview. Miss M'Cracken then followed her brother to prison, and was horrified to find that he was ordered to prepare for immediate execution. He desired to see the Rev. S. Kelburn; but Mr. Kelburn was confined to bed by illness, and it was a considerable time before he appeared. Meanwhile the Rev. William S. Dickson, D.D., then a prisoner under the same roof, was brought in and received some communications from M'Cracken about personal matters, which he entered in his note book. At last Mr. Kelburn arrived; all knelt down, and he led in prayer. When about to retire, he wished to take Miss M'Cracken away from the harrowing scene, but she refused to leave her beloved brother. Having borrowed a pair of scissors, she cut off a lock of his hair; but an officer named Fox then coming into the room, said that too much use had been made of such things, and made her give up the precious *souvenir*.

At five o'clock M'Cracken was ordered to the place of execution—the old market-house which stood at the corner of Corn Market and High Street, and which had been given to the town by his own great-grandfather. His sister took him by the arm, and thus they walked to the fatal spot. There Miss M'Cracken was told that the general had ordered her to leave; but she refused to go, and clasped her brother in her arms. Three times he kissed her; then, seeing a friend of his, named Boyd, in the crowd, he beckoned him forward, and said in a low tone, "Take poor Mary home." She now left with her friend, who comforted her with the thought that they would all meet in heaven. Yet, even then there was a last lingering hope to which she clung—the hangman had accepted a bribe to discharge his duty so as to save her brother's life, and medical friends were ready to apply every

remedy as soon as they received his body. After his sister left, M'Cracken ascended the scaffold and attempted to speak to the people, but his words were drowned by the trampling of the cavalry, and he quietly resigned himself to his fate. Years before this fatal day he had told his friend, James Hope, that he did not desire to ever die of sickness. In a few minutes all was over. His body was given to his friends, but all efforts to restore animation were unsuccessful.

His remains were buried in the graveyard beside the Episcopal church in High Street. Some years afterwards the Rev. Edward May, parson of the parish, got many of the graves levelled, and the ground sold for building purposes. The dust of the patriot lies under one of the houses erected on this site. His coat and sword may still be seen in the Belfast museum.

Henry Joy M'Cracken exceeded almost every other leader of the United Irishmen in forgetfulness of self and in attachment to his country. He was the great bond of union that held together the North and the South. He freely gave his life in a vain effort to save his country from oppression, and if we as Unionists condemn the fatal mistake he made, we must respect his motives, admire his courage, and venerate his memory.

# HENRY MUNRO.

HENRY MUNRO came from a respectable family of Scottish descent. For a lengthened period his father pursued a successful mercantile career in Lisburn, where he died in 1795, leaving a widow with one son and two daughters. He was a Presbyterian by birth and conviction; but his wife being a strong Episcopalian, brought up his children in connection with her own sect. His son Henry, born in July, 1758, was educated in Lisburn. He served an apprenticeship to the business of a woollen draper, and, besides, received instruction in the manufacture of linen. Afterwards, as a trader on his own account, he carried on a draper's shop in Market Square, Lisburn, and also attended the linen halls of Lurgan, Banbridge, and Tandragee, where he bought webs for M'Cance of Suffolk and Handcock of Lisburn, the leading bleachers in the neighbourhood.

Having a good knowledge of his business, and being exceedingly popular, he succeeded well, both as a shopkeeper and as a linen merchant. Devoid of literary tastes, he took great delight in hunting, shooting, and other out-door exercises. He was celebrated for his speed in running, and, it is said, that he often jumped across one of the locks that had been constructed in the Lagan canal, near Lisburn. One day when he was in Lurgan market, a cry was raised that the wooden cupola of the Episcopal Church had taken fire. Ladders were procured and buckets of water were brought to the scene of the conflagration; but not a man would venture to go up. Munro then volunteered his services, mounted the ladder, and successfully extinguished the fire.

Having a taste for military exercises, he became a volunteer in 1778, just after the Lisburn Corps had been enrolled. Before long, he acquired such a good knowledge of the use of arms that he acted for a time as drill-sergeant to some of the companies. Besides, he was a Freemason, and he became head of the lodge in Lisburn. In this capacity, he often presided at their social entertainments, and was distinguished as an after-dinner orator. He married a celebrated country belle, Margaret, fourth daughter of Mr Robert Johnston, who resided at Seymour Hill, Dunmurry. As time wore on, Munro's interest in politics gained the mastery over his other desires and pursuits. Being an Episcopalian, he was free from the religious persecution that bore so heavily on Presbyterians and Roman Catholics, and being a shopkeeper he was free from the serfdom in which farmers dragged out a miserable existence; yet he felt for the sufferings of others. He desired to make the Irish Parliament representative of the Irish people, in order that the rights of the farmers should be maintained, and that an Act might be passed for the emancipation of Roman Catholics, as a matter of justice to his countrymen of another race and religion.

Notwithstanding his advanced Liberalism, he did not join the Society of United Irishmen when it was first formed; however, in 1795, he cast his lot with this organization, and soon became active in furthering its interests, on the lines of a constitutional agitation. When the leaders of the United Irishmen began to prepare for an insurrection, he determined to take no part in such a dangerous movement. This resolution he maintained until just before the "Turn-out" in County Down, when he happened one day to see a man scourged by the authorities, in

order to make him confess political crimes.* Munro's wrath was aroused at this exhibition of arbitrary power and wanton cruelty. Indignant at the tyranny of the Government, and fearing lest informations might be lodged against himself, he sent his wife for safety to her father's, and three days afterwards, on Monday, the 11th of June, left home in order to shun the coming catastrophe. On his way, he chanced to meet a body of insurgents marching towards Ballynahinch. His military tastes were so well known to this party, that they solicited him to become their leader. At the same time, a messenger, it is stated, arrived with the information that he had been selected by a general committee, met at Templepatrick, to act as Adjutant-General for Down, under Henry Joy M'Cracken, who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the rebel forces in the North-East. But this meeting had been held several days previously, and it is hard to believe that Munro had not already heard of his nomination. Besides, two other gentlemen were named as well as himself, and the appointment was to be offered to whichever one of the three to whom the information could be first communicated. Be this as it may, Munro accepted of the difficult and dangerous position, and at once began to discharge the duties of his office.

Hitherto, the rebels in County Down had met with no crushing defeat. On the previous Saturday, the 9th of June, a large party, under Dr. Jackson, of Newtownards, had "turned out" near Saintfield. Hearing that a detachment of Royal forces was marching to attack them, they determined to take their assailants by surprise. Accordingly, a

*This man's name was Hood. He was by trade a tailor, and was a member of the Mason Lodge of which Munro was master. Another account is to the effect that Munro left the town lest he might see the punishment inflicted.

large body of the insurgents took up their position in a wood near the town, while a short way off, another party concealed themselves behind a thick hedge, then in full bloom, that skirted the narrow highway which led to Saintfield. Along this road Colonel Stapleton was marching to the attack, with both cavalry and infantry. He was accompanied by three Episcopal ministers. One of these was named Mortimer, and another was the notorious Cleland, Lord Londonderry's agent and general manager. Before one-half of the army had come up to where the hedge began, the insurgents happened to spy Mr. Mortimer. Now, the Episcopal clergymen generally were more tyrannical in collecting their tithes than landlords in exacting their rents. Hence no class was more hated in the community. At the sight of Mortimer, the rebels, unable to control themselves longer, opened fire. Many of the cavalry fell, and the unfortunate parson was shot dead. The military, taken by surprise, wavered ; but Captain Unit, of the York Fencibles, forced the hedge, and came into close conflict with the rebels. For a time, the struggle was desperate. At last, the cavalry were driven back on the infantry; but the infantry, although they succeeded in repulsing the insurgents who pursued the horsemen, did not venture to attack the other party stationed in the wood. After some time, they retreated to Comber with a loss of sixty men, leaving the rebels in possession of the position which they had at first occupied. In this engagement, Richard Frazier was the leading spirit among the insurgent forces, although not the nominal commander.

The United Irishmen of the Southern Ards "turned out" on the 11th June and attacked Portaferry, which was defended by Captain Matthews with a party of yeomanry.

Matthews occupied the Markethouse, and he walled up the arches of the lower story to prevent the rebels setting fire to the loft. The yeomanry, secure in their fortification, kept up a vigorous fire on the pikemen as they advanced. Notwithstanding this, the insurgents marched up to the attack courageously. Not only were they exposed to the musket balls of the yeomanry, but they had also to face the fire of a revenue cruiser, under Capt. Hopkins, which assisted Matthews in his defence. Thus assailed, the rebels were unable to carry the Markethouse, and they withdrew their attacking party. Then Matthews, fearing a second attack, retreated to Strangford with the yeomanry.

On the 10th of June, a large party of insurgents attacked Newtownards. Repulsed at first, they soon returned with strong reinforcements in order to renew the assault. Meanwhile, the Royal troops had retreated, and the rebels occupied the town without opposition. From thence they marched to join their brethren at Saintfield, and these forces, when united, were nearly 7,000 strong.

About a mile from Saintfield, and not far from the road to Lisburn, stood the house of a loyalist named Hugh M'Kee. This building was a comfortable slated farm-house, standing on a level terrace that had been formed on the side of a hill. The back side-wall was close to the rising ground behind, and it was without windows.

M'Kee's family consisted of his wife, five sons and three daughters—all grown up. Besides these, there was a blind girl, aged thirteen—a relative, and also a servant named John Boles. M'Kee and his family were described by their neighbours as "A lot of big coarse folk," and they were exceedingly unpopular on account of taking part with the landlords and rectors against the Presbyterian people in their

fight for freedom. Some of M'Kee's sons were yeomen, and they were all regarded as informers. Every night they went about, challenging whoever they met, and firing shots to frighten their political opponents. M'Kee's daughter Nelly, on one occasion, attempted to cut the head off a United Irishman who had been wounded, and would have certainly carried out her intention, but for the intervention of two Scotch soldiers who happened to be then in her father's house.

On Saturday, the 9th of June, as the rebel army marched to Ballynahinch, it was determined to put an end to the M'Kees' insults, and a large party, under John Breeze of Killinchy, were selected for carrying out this determination.

Although M'Kee had received timely notice of the intended attack, neither he nor any of his family thought of flight. They loaded their guns, barricaded the door, and prepared for battle. The insurgents advanced to the house, and ordered M'Kee and his sons to join the patriot army or abide the consequences. To this request they gave an indignant refusal. Then arose from the rebel ranks the cry of, "Hang the informers." On hearing this, the M'Kees fired, wounding Breeze in the leg, and killing several of the insurgents. The women loaded, while M'Kee and his sons fired. So true was their aim, and so many of the assailants were killed or wounded, that it was determined to adopt a more safe and deadly method of attack. Some of the rebels procured a ladder at the house of a neighbour named William Dodd. On their way back, they compelled two young men whom they met—William Shaw and William M'Caw—to carry the ladder; but when these lads found out the purpose for which it was intended, they absolutely refused to bring it any further. Yet on account of this

forced service, both were afterwards hanged by the Government. The ladder was then brought by some of the insurgents and placed against the back of M'Kee's house, where there were no windows. A man named Charles Young went up and removed a few slates from the roof, disclosing a large pile of flax on the loft within. Laughing with fiendish joy at the discovery, he called for a light. He was supplied with a blazing wisp of straw, which he pushed in through the opening, and immediately the flax was in flames. The heat soon became intense. Blazing bits of wood, and sparks from the ignited flax, began to fall on the inmates of the doomed dwelling. But the M'Kees fought on. The women brought crocks filled with milk from the pantry, and threw handfuls of the thick cream on themselves and on their friends to keep their clothing from igniting. At last, Boles, the servant, wanted to open the door that they might all make a race for life; but the women held them back. Then Boles himself jumped out of a window and tried to escape, but he was immediately run through with a pike, and mortally wounded. Soon afterwards, the fire caught a store of gunpowder in the house, and caused a fearful explosion. The roof fell in, and all the inmates miserably perished. Boles, who had been left for dead on the street, was afterwards carried into a neighbour's house, where he lived for a few days, and told how the M'Kees had acted within the burning building.

On Sunday morning, the 10th of June, 1798, a detachment of the royal army took possession of Ballynahinch, and seized everything they wanted. Breakfast was ordered for both officers and men; but, afterwards, when the bill was presented, the Colonel tore it in pieces, and said that this was his reply.

When Munro accepted command of the County Down rebels, they were marching towards Ballynahinch. As they approached the town, he sent forward one of his officers, named Townsend, to dislodge the Royal forces; but the soldiers, having first hanged the only baker in the place, lest he should make bread for the rebels, withdrew before Townsend entered. Thus it came to pass that, on the 12th of June, the insurgents obtained quiet possession of Ballynahinch.

Munro now took up his position on Ednavady Hill, a little to the south-west of the town. But he sent a party of his best musketeers, under M'Cance, to occupy the Windmill Hill, which was about a mile distant from his position, and almost exactly opposite, on the other side of Ballynahinch. Meanwhile foraging parties went round the country to demand "Men, provisions, arms, and ammunition." Sometimes, when they failed to exact their demands, they "annexed" what they required without the consent of the owners. They drove in and slaughtered cattle, and they carried away some oaten meal. But after all, the greater part of their provisions was obtained from the freewill offerings of the people, as is related in Professor Thompson's interesting narrative.

According to previous arrangement, two bodies of the King's troops—one from Downpatrick under Colonel Stewart, and another from Belfast under Colonel Nugent, amounting in all to about 2,000 rank and file—were to meet at the junction of two roads close to Ballynahinch. The Downpatrick detachment arrived first, and about two hours afterwards, General Nugent's division appeared, leaving its line of march marked by the flaming homesteads of many innocent farmers. Had these detachments been attacked separately, they would, in all probability, have both been

defeated; but Munro, who seemed strangely infatuated by over-confidence, missed his opportunity.

The outposts of the rebels under M'Cance, on the Windmill Hill, were driven in, and his chief position assaulted with vigour. For more than an hour he held his own, and at last retreated with reluctance in obedience to Munro's orders; but not until he had inflicted considerable loss on the advancing soldiers. Townsend, who held Ballynahinch, withdrew his men, in obedience to similar orders, but he also retreated most reluctantly, being conscious that Munro had made a great mistake in retiring from positions that the soldiers had failed to carry.

Meanwhile, the cannonade on both sides was continued; but, on the one hand, the guns of the rebels were small, while on the other, the fusees did not properly fit the shells used by the royal army. Accordingly there was no great damage inflicted on either side. After Munro withdrew his outposts, he offered battle to the royal army, but General Nugent declined to attack him.

During the ensuing night the soldiers pillaged Ballynahinch, and burned 63 out of the 130 houses it contained. Only seven of the inhabitants had remained in the town; three of these were burned to death, two were shot by the soldiers, and the remaining two succeeded in escaping. As most of the military were drunk, there was a fearful scene of disorder. Munro, being informed of the state of matters in the town, called a council of war. His officers were unanimously of opinion that an attack should be made at once on the drunk and disorganized soldiers. But strangely infatuated, he declared that they would fight like men, and not under "the cloud of night." This decision was so distasteful and discouraging to the insurgents, that 700 of them immediately marched off with their leader.

Next morning, Wednesday the 13th of June, at dawn, Munro drew up his troops for action; and it was admitted by all, even by the General of the Royal army, that he handled his men with great ability. He opened fire with eight cannons, which, although small, were well served; and under their fire the rebel army advanced in two divisions. One party proceeded to attack the town on the right; they assailed the Royal forces, who were drawn up in a square, and compelled them to retreat with the loss of their commanding officer. The other column of rebels, led by Munro himself, forced their way into Ballynahinch in spite of a terrific fire of both cannons and muskets. Before long their supply of ammunition was exhausted; then they charged with bayonet and pike. Nothing could withstand their courage and enthusiasm. They drove the Royal troops backwards through the town, and General Nugent, thinking all was lost, ordered a retreat.

The blast of the trumpet that conveyed the General's orders to retreat, was worth a thousand men to the Government, inasmuch as it changed the result of the battle. The rebels, without discipline, enveloped in smoke, and unaccustomed to the usages of warfare, thought that the signal in question indicated the attack of some strong reinforcement. Suddenly they became panic-stricken, and, turning round, fled back towards Ednavady, while the British forces were retreating in an opposite direction.

But the retreat of the rebels was soon observed. A regiment of light dragoons that had been held as reserve, charged Munro's troops as they fled, and the defeat of the British was, in a very few minutes, changed into their complete victory. It was with difficulty that the rebel general was able to lead part of his followers back to his former position

on Ednavady Hill. Surrounded there on three sides, he succeeded in retreating through an opening on the fourth side with a small detachment of his defeated troops.

The Royal cavalry, divided into a number of small parties, cut down many of the fugitives. Gordon estimates that the King's troops lost about fifty, and the rebels at least three times as many.

Among the slain was a young lady, Miss Elizabeth Grey—often described in song and romance as "Betsy Grey." She was daughter of Mr. Hans Grey, and was born at Granshaw, close to "the six road ends;" but in 1797, her father had removed to another house in the same district. Her mother was dead, and, being an only daughter, her sorrowing parent had brought her up with great care, and had her carefully educated at a ladies' school. She was now twenty years of age, beautiful, and possessed of many accomplishments. When the "Turn-out" took place she went to Ballynahinch with her brother and her lover, Willie Boal. After all was lost, the three sought safety in flight, and Elizabeth pushed her sword into the roof of a thatched house which they passed in their flight. Overtaken and attacked by the cavalry when about half a mile from Hillsborough, Boal was wounded in the neck, and a yeoman was about to plunge his sword into young Grey, when Betsy caught hold of the weapon. Then the gallant soldiers made a murderous onslaught on the defenceless girl. One of them, named Little, cut her hand off with a blow of his sword, and another, named Thomas Nelson, sent a bullet through her eye into her brain. In a few minutes the brother, the lover, and the sweetheart all lay dead. Afterwards Little's wife wore the girl's earrings and green petticoat.

Munro succeeded in escaping from the field of battle,

but a large reward was offered for his discovery, and he kept in concealment; for some days he got shelter from a well-known loyalist; but on Saturday, the 16th, leaving this place of safety, he sought refuge between Lisburn and Hillsborough, five or six miles from the scene of his defeat. There he met a man named Holmes, who, in consideration of five pounds and a parcel of linen shirts, promised to conceal him for a few days, until an amnesty might be proclaimed. In accordance with that promise, he placed Munro in the end of his pig's stye, and covered him with a few "waps" of straw. Having thus reaped his reward for concealing the fugitive, he determined to reap the reward of betraying him. Accordingly, he walked off three miles to Hillsborough, and gave the necessary information to the authorities. That very evening, Munro was apprehended by four members of what was called the "Black Troop." A bribe that he offered to his captors was refused, and he was handcuffed, and marched first to Hillsborough, and then to Lisburn. His appearance was forlorn, and his clothes were so tattered that his friend, Mr. G. Whitla, supplied him with a new suit.

Next day his mother, having obtained admission to his cell, told him that she hoped he would continue true to the cause of Irish liberty, and that she would be less grieved at his death than if he betrayed any of his associates. But the conference was then cut short by the dragoon on guard, who compelled Mrs. Munro to leave the apartment. Afterwards his father-in-law was the only friend permitted to visit him.

On Monday, the 18th, Munro was tried by court-martial before General Goldie and other officers. He was found guilty, and sentenced to death with the usual mutilation, at four o'clock the same afternoon.

This sentence was carried out in the Market Square,

almost opposite to his own residence, where, according to some authorities, his wife and mother were spectators of the terrible tragedy. But this is incorrect, as I have been informed by Mr. M'Call, who has more knowledge of these matters than any person now alive,* that Mrs. Henry Munro was removed to her father's the Friday before the battle of Ballynahinch. The old woman, widow Munro, never opened her shop on that sad Monday.

At four o'clock, Munro was brought out of prison under a strong guard. He was dressed in a dark coat, nankeen knee breeches, and white stockings. On his way to the scaffold, he was permitted to call at the house of Dr. Cupples, an Episcopalian minister, to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Afterwards the mournful procession proceeded to the place of execution. At the foot of the ladder, Munro settled several accounts, particularly one with Captain Stewart that had been disputed. These affairs being arranged, and the prisoner's hands tightly strapped behind his back, he said a short prayer, and then sprang from the ground to the second round of the ladder; but the step broke, and he fell to the street. "I'm not cowed, gentlemen," he said, and then, making one vigorous effort, he sprang up to the third step. It is stated by some authorities that he adjusted the rope himself, exclaimed in a loud voice, "I die for my country," and then threw himself

*Since these words were written, Mr. M'Call has entered upon his rest and reward. He was born on the 21st of April, 1805, and died on the 12th of March, 1897, having attained to a patriarchal age. He is well known as author of "Our Staple Manufactures," "The House of Downshire," and several other valuable works. He wrote many articles for the Belfast newspapers, and was greatly respected by a large circle of friends. His mind was vigorous, and his memory unimpaired until the last. Only a few weeks before his death he, very kindly, wrote me a long letter relating many interesting circumstances connected with Harry Munro and his family.

off the ladder. But, if his hands had been previously tied, it is most improbable that he could adjust the rope himself. Most accounts, however, agree in the statement that he jumped off the ladder without any assistance from the hangman.

Afterwards his head was cut off in accordance with his barbarous sentence. It is stated in Mr. R. M. Young's very interesting book entitled "Ulster in 1798," that the shaft of the hatchet had been rendered slippery by the dampness of the day, that a dragoon handed the executioner a bit of chamois to wrap round it, and that, some time ago, when the grave was opened, it was found to contain a hatchet with chamois still attached to the shaft.

Thus perished by the hands of the hangman one of the bravest spirits among the Northern rebels—a dauntless patriot, who did not fear to die for what he believed to be the good of his country.

Madden states that the widow of Henry Munro lived till 1840, when she died in the house of her nephew, Mr. Alex. Arthur, of Belfast, and that his daughter was married to an Independent clergyman named Hanson.

With reference to these statements, Mr. Hugh M'Call wrote me :—"I don't think Harry Munro's wife had a child. . . . I never heard of any children being born of that marriage. It is not correct, I think, that the widow lived to 1840, or even to 1830."

After Munro's execution, his mother lived for several years in Lisburn, and continued to keep her shop for the sale of toys and haberdashery. Mr. M'Call thus alluded to her: —"The old lady was a special friend of my mother, and on Sunday afternoons she usually came to my father's house and spent the evening. I often heard her refer to her son as

'Our Harry,' and, juvenile as I was, I have never forgotten Mrs. Munro's appearance."

Although Harry Munro was rash and headstrong, he was popular with the people. He possessed a considerable amount of military skill, but that skill was rendered useless by strange ideas of honour, which prevented him from taking advantage of opportunities more favourable than fell to the lot of any other commander of the Northern insurgents.

# SAMUEL NEILSON.

N the 20th of August, 1751, Mr. Alexander Neilson was ordained to the pastoral charge of Ballyroney, a Presbyterian congregation near Rathfriland. Exactly two months afterwards, he married Agnes, daughter of Samuel Carson.* This worthy couple had eight sons and five daughters. Their third son Samuel, born at Ballyroney on the 17th of September, 1761, is well known to the world as the proprietor and editor of the *Northern Star*, and as founder of the society of UNITED IRISHMEN. He was educated partly by his father, and partly at a school in a neighbouring town. From his childhood, he had an eager desire for knowledge, and he was distinguished for his attainments in mathematics. Bold, manly, generous and persevering, he was looked up to as a leader among his school companions, and, by them, his memory was always revered.

When Neilson was about sixteen years of age, he became an apprentice to his elder brother, John, a woollen draper in Belfast. In September, 1785, after the time of his apprenticeship had expired, he married a daughter of Mr. Wm. Bryson, and, before long, commenced business for himself. His shop was situated on the ground now occupied by the "Commercial

*Mrs. Carson was twice married. By her first husband, John Finlay, she had one daughter, who, on the 29th of July, 1746, married Mr. William Bigger, of Hightown. She became mother of eight sons and one daughter. The sons have numerous descendants occupying respectable positions, among whom is Mr. Francis Joseph Bigger, one of the editors of the Ulster Journal of Archæology. The daughter of William Bigger was grandmother of Mr. William Fee M'Kinney, of Carnmoney, well known as an antiquarian.

Buildings," and was called the "Irish Woollen Warehouse." As his father-in-law was wealthy, it is probable that Neilson used his wife's fortune in setting up this business. At any rate his mercantile career was at first successful, and, in 1792, he was reputed to be worth about eight thousand pounds. But I rather think this estimate of his wealth is exaggerated, and that he did not grow rich so rapidly as is stated by Madden; for I find that, in 1789, he was under the necessity of borrowing a sum of money from George Smith, the husband of Jane his eldest sister. There is no doubt, however, but he was a successful merchant, and that he was in very comfortable circumstances when he began to devote himself seriously to politics.

Neilson, like many other Irish patriots, commenced his political career as a Volunteer. At first the Ulster Volunteers were composed almost entirely of Presbyterians. Dr. Campbell states, in his valuable manuscript history that, in these associations, there were commonly some Episcopalians mixed with the numerous bodies of Presbyterians, and that it was customary in many places for them all to march to Church and to Meeting on alternate Sundays. Nay more, it is certain that sometimes a company of Protestant Volunteers, who duly celebrated the victory of the Boyne, would march to Mass to show their sympathy with their Roman Catholic countrymen, who endured even greater political and religious oppression than the Irish Nonconformists. But the power of the Volunteers diminished greatly after the conclusion of the American War. The Government became opposed to the organisation, and in 1793 prohibited their meetings.

Lord Charlemont, in a letter written on the 14th of June, 1789, suggested the institution of a Whig club on constitutional principles. In accordance with this suggestion,

a political association named "The Northern Whig Club" was established in Belfast to promote Parliamentary reform and legislative independence. Its members were distinguished for their loyalty, and they duly toasted the "glorious, pious, and immortal memory."

The first meeting of this new organization was held on the 20th of March, 1790, and on the 8th of April Parliament was dissolved. A General Election followed, and a member of the Club, the Hon. Robert Stewart—afterwards Viscount Castlereagh—became a candidate for one of the seats in County Down. The contest lasted for sixty-nine days, and Neilson was actively engaged in assisting Mr. Stewart, who, in spite of the Episcopal aristocracy, succeeded in gaining the second seat. But Mr. Stewart was a very lukewarm reformer. Before long he bade farewell to his Presbyterian faith and his Liberal politics. Indeed, all was hollow in the Northern Whig Club. Many of its aristocratic leaders hated in their hearts the reform which they professed to demand, lest it would transfer the power of electing the Parliament from landholders like themselves to the Irish farmers. Under such half-hearted leaders, the club neither accomplished its aims nor evoked popular enthusiasm.

Convinced that this association would fail to accomplish the reform expected by the people, Samuel Neilson was gradually brought to believe that the only way of overthrowing the power of the Episcopal aristocracy was by uniting all creeds and classes of the people in a great confederacy, and thus, by joining together all who hated oppression, be more powerful to fight for freedom.

This idea was communicated by Neilson to Thomas Russell, Henry Joy M'Cracken, and a few other friends at a meeting held in Belfast. Some, at first, objected to the idea

of relying upon Roman Catholics to take part in the proposed struggle, as it was thought that they were not sufficiently enlightened to co-operate with Protestants, and not sufficiently independent of the power of the priesthood to be trusted in a fight for freedom. But M'Cracken took part with Neilson, and the principles of religious liberty and religious equality became a prominent feature of the new Society of United Irishmen. That association was founded on the 14th of October, 1791, at a house in Crown Entry, Belfast. Theobald Wolfe Tone came to assist at its formation. He wrote the declaration, and took such a leading part in its organization that some have made the mistake of regarding him as its founder.

Samuel Neilson was not only the first who conceived and carried out the plan of joining all Irishmen together in one grand confederacy to demand Parliamentary reform, but on the 4th of January, 1792, he started a newspaper entitled the *Northern Star* to bring the principles of that association before the people of Ulster. On the 3rd of next July, a company of twelve gentlemen—all Presbyterians—was formed to carry on its publication. The capital amounted to £2,000, divided into 40 shares, of which 13 were held by Neilson, who eventually became sole proprietor. The printer and publisher was John Rabb, the editor was Neilson, and the chief contributors were Counsellor Sampson, Thomas Russell, Rev. James Porter, Rev. Sinclaire Kelburne, and Rev. Dr. Dickson. It appeared twice a week, and its price was twopence, of which one-half was for the Government stamp. Its circulation amounted to between four and five thousand. A great part of the space was devoted to recording the triumphs of the French revolutionists. But, at the same time, the general tyranny of the Government,

and the still more oppressive local tyranny of the landlords and rectors received due attention. In this paper, first appeared the celebrated letters signed "Billy Bluff," in which the Rev. James Porter lashed the landlords with such severity, that they demanded his blood to atone for his audacity in attacking the class privileged not only to rule, but to live on the labours of others. After all, the articles in the *Star* were mild and loyal when compared with much that has appeared in the Dublin press within the memory of many still alive. To a modern reader, the writers in the *Star* seem to discuss intolerable abuses with wonderful moderation. During the first year of this paper's existence, the printers and proprietors were prosecuted by the crown, but the prosecution was unsuccessful. Then, in 1796, the office was most illegally attacked and plundered by the military authorities. Neilson and others connected with the paper were imprisoned in Dublin. On the 19th of May, 1797, the *Star* was finally suppressed by the military, the presses were broken, and the type thrown into Wilson's Court—an act utterly illegal and arbitrary, but for which there was then no redress.

Meanwhile Neilson had exerted himself in many other ways to promote the liberty of the taxed, tithed, and enslaved farmers of Ireland. He knew well that the great object of the class who ruled was to maintain their own power and to augment their rents by kindling the fires of animosity between those who professed different religious systems. But Neilson's grand object was to get Irishmen of all religious persuasions to forget their rivalries, and to unite against the ruling class. In many Northern districts, continual feuds between the Peep-o'-Day Boys and the Defenders had led to bloodshed. Religious differences resulted in

personal hatred. In July, 1792, Neilson, accompanied by Tone and Lowry, went to Rathfriland, his native place, where disgraceful riots had broken out between the Presbyterians and Roman Catholics. With the assistance of some neighbouring gentry, these disturbances were quelled; but they broke out once more, and again Neilson visited the district; but was unable to get the two parties to live together in harmony. Afterwards he was engaged in settling similar disputes that took place in County Armagh. He was present at a great convention held in Dungannon Presbyterian Church, on the 15th of February, 1793, in which all Ulster was represented. This assembly passed resolutions expressive of attachment to the British Constitution, condemned Republican forms of Government, and demanded Parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation.

Towards the end of 1794, Neilson became sole proprietor of the *Northern Star;* but the expense of various prosecutions that he endured, and the time he devoted to his paper and to politics, compelled him to relinquish his original business, and to part with his property.

In 1795, the United Irishmen, despairing of obtaining Parliamentary reform by constitutional means, became Republican in their principles and revolutionary in their aims. Neilson declares that this change of sentiment grew out of the severities practised by the Government; but I imagine the principles and success of the French revolutionists were an important factor in the new movement.

The same year, Theobald Wolfe Tone paid another visit to Belfast, and Neilson was one of a party who went with him to Cave Hill, and there entered into a solemn obligation never to desist from their efforts until Ireland would have gained her freedom.

At last, in September, 1796, a warrant was issued for the arrest of Neilson, and search was made for him by the Earl of Westmeath, Captain Coulson, and a large body of soldiers. In their search, they ransacked Counsellor Sampson's house from top to bottom, and did not even respect the privacy of Mrs. Sampson's room. But they failed to find Mr. Neilson. Sampson tauntingly told them that his wife was not in the habit of entertaining gentlemen privately, and that they ought to look inside some bandboxes which they had neglected to open. Meanwhile, Neilson, having heard of the search that was made for him, went and surrendered himself voluntarily.

On the evening of the 16th of September, 1796, a few hours after Neilson's arrest, he was removed to Dublin with Thomas Russell, Henry Haslett, and several other prisoners. They travelled in post-chaises, escorted by dragoons, and, on their arrival, were lodged in Newgate. At first, they were denied the use of writing materials, and were kept in solitary confinement. But, very soon, the number of prisoners was so greatly increased by numerous arrests, that it was impossible to keep them separate, and, besides, their friends outside were always able to communicate with them surreptitiously. On one occasion, Mrs. Bond* obtained leave to send a pie to her husband. Beneath the crust, it was filled up with letters, newspapers, and writing materials, which were thus safely introduced.

Afterwards, the Government relaxed their rules, and permitted the wives of the married prisoners to visit their husbands. But the accused had sometimes other visitors whose presence brought the reverse of pleasure. Govern-

* Mrs. Oliver Bond was a daughter of Henry Jackson, of Dublin, brother of John Jackson, of Crieve, County Monaghan.

ment officials in high authority went, at times, from cell to cell in disguise to interrogate, and even to insult, the unfortunate inmates. One night Lord Carhampton, the commander-in-chief, visited Neilson, and, on being recognised, inquired where the prisoner had known him. "I had the honour," replied Neilson, "to be reviewed by your lordship in the first battalion of Irish Volunteers when the light cavalry on the plains of Broughshane——" "Stop, sir," interrupted the commander, "these are not fit subjects for prison reflections; go to bed, sir, and dream of something else than Irish Volunteers." Then his lordship left Neilson and proceeded to the next cell, where he found Dr. Crawford, a celebrated physician, and the Rev. Sinclaire Kelburn, minister of the Third Presbyterian Church, Belfast. Being invited by Mr. Kelburn to take a seat, he replied that he never sat in company with traitors. Then he proceeded to the common hall, and finding one of the prisoners with a knot of green ribbon in his cap, ordered him to be placed in irons. On another occasion, his Lordship, when visiting a prisoner in his dungeon, wounded him in the face with his cane.

Among the high officials who sometimes visited those accused of political crimes, was Lord Castlereagh. In 1797, he chanced to meet Neilson in Kilmainham. Doubtless remembering how much he was himself indebted to the prisoner for political services during the County Down election of 1790, he expressed regret at finding him there, and asked if he could in any way render him a service. Neilson thanked his Lordship, and stated that he did not wish to ask a favour for himself, but that there were two men, Pat Whelan and Martin Short, under sentence of death for a crime of which they were innocent,

that the informer, on whose false evidence they had been convicted, felt such remorse that, every night, he disturbed the prisoners with his wailings; and that it would be an act of justice were his Lordship to intercede for these men, unjustly condemned. This he promised to do, with the result that the men were reprieved, and, soon afterwards, liberated.

Meanwhile, the Government were using every means in their power to obtain evidence necessary to convict Neilson and his companions. In my life of M'Cracken, I have alluded to the fact, that, before their arrest, a poor weaver named James Hope, who knew all their political secrets, had been offered £500 through Mr. Ferris Martin, of Ballynahinch, for such evidence as would secure their capital conviction. But Hope, preferring the poverty of a patriot to the wealth of an informer, remained faithful to his friends and his principles.

At last, an Englishman named Bird promised to furnish the necessary evidence; and the authorities, depending upon this informer, served Neilson with notice of trial. But, although Bird had been brought by poverty to accept the wages of infamy, he was not altogether devoid of conscience. This he proved by absconding, when he was urged by Major Sirr* to commit perjury for the Government, by swearing that a certain Orangeman was a United Irishman, in order to prevent him coming forward as a witness in favour of some political prisoners. There being now no evidence against Neilson, he was released on the 22nd of February, 1798, after a confinement of one year and five months. For a time he took no part in the United Irish organization, and it is stated that he was consulted by Mr. Pelham as to the

* Charles Henry Sirr was at first a wine merchant, but, in 1796, he received the appointment of deputy-town-major in Dublin.

probability of conciliating the North of Ireland by granting Parliamentary reform. It is certain, however, that Neilson did not long adhere to the conditions of his release; but he asserts that the recommencement of his revolutionary career was a result of the Government breaking their engagements with him. At any rate, he resumed his political activity. Day and night he rode about to organise the United Irishmen. and he frequently visited their commander-in-chief, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who, in the midst of depression, was always re-animated and encouraged by these conferences. On the 19th of May, 1798, they dined together at Murphy's; but Neilson had not been gone more than an hour, when Major Sirr and a party of soldiers entered through the open door, and, after a desperate struggle, captured his Lordship. As the insurrection had been fixed for the 23rd of May, the liberation of Lord Edward and the other imprisoned leaders became most desirable. Neilson, with his usual boldness, having determined to accomplish this by attacking the prison, went to view the building himself. While he was engaged in calculating its height by counting the courses of masonry, he was seen by Gregg, the gaoler, and was arrested after a desperate struggle, in which he received fifty wounds. He was now indicted for high treason, and brought before the judges in irons, but the authorities did not then proceed with his trial.

After the insurrection had failed, he learned the result from Mr. Crawford, his solicitor. The speedy execution of several friends horrified him greatly, and a desire to save many others whose death seemed certain, caused him to listen to an offer that was now made by the Government, to the effect, that if the political prisoners would give information of what passed between the United Irishmen and foreign

states, and engage to emigrate to some country approved by the authorities, they would be freed from prosecution. It was expressly stated that they would not be required to implicate any of their friends, and it was understood that the benefit of the compact would be extended to "Such persons in custody or not in custody" as might choose to be included. This proposal being accepted by the prisoners, and signed by almost all whose signatures were required, it was thought that there would now be an end to the executions. But on the morning of the 28th of July, as William Michael Byrne, then under sentence of death, sat at breakfast with Bond, Neilson, and Mrs. Neilson, the jailer appeared, beckoned Byrne to the door, and led him off to execution, although he himself and all the other prisoners were certain that his life would be spared as a result of the compact almost concluded.

At last, the agreement was duly signed, and the prisoners were examined. In violation of the compact, an attempt was made to get such information from Neilson as would have implicated some of his friends; but he declared that he would never divulge what he was asked to reveal, even he were sent back to his cell or to the scaffold. After this protest, his examination was continued; and, when his testimony was accepted, he naturally expected a speedy release.

Notwithstanding the compact, several of the prisoners were retained in custody. Neilson and some others were sent to Fort George, in the North of Scotland. He left on the 19th of March, 1799, and did not arrive until the 9th of April. Although in poor health when removed, he gradually recovered, as a result of the change and of better treatment. During his imprisonment at Fort George, he wrote regularly

to his wife. In his letters, he urged her to make their children familiar with the precepts of Scripture, and with those practical duties so well pointed out in the Shorter Catechism. He enjoined her to teach them to hate falsehood and hypocrisy, and to train them up in the habits of industry. He warned the children to remember that, wherever they went or whatever they did, they were in the presence of God, who rewarded the virtuous and punished the guilty, and before whose judgment they must one day appear.

On the 8th of January, 1800, Neilson wrote the governor of the prison to the effect that he had determined to submit to privation rather than add to the misery of his family, now reduced from affluence to poverty; and that, therefore, he had resolved to "forego his supper," in order to confine his expenditure within his allowance. In 1801, his son William was permitted to come to live with him, and Neilson, to provide for the additional expenditure, still further reduced his own allowance by giving up his wine. William Neilson, a boy of very great talents, was now but eight years of age, yet he wrote his mother interesting and well-composed letters, giving an account of his studies and amusements. He was taught arithmetic by Dowling, history by Emmet, Latin by Dr. Dickson, music by Cormick, mathematics by Russell, and English by his father.

After a confinement of more than four years without trial, Neilson was at last released, on condition of emigrating to America. On the 30th of June, 1802, he sailed from Fort George. His first destination was Hamburg, but from thence he went to Altona. Unable to secure a direct passage to America, he ventured to return home in order to visit his family. Having arrived in Dublin, he disguised himself with a wig and spectacles, and accompanied by his faithful friend,

James Hope, set out for Belfast. Remaining there only three days, he returned to Dublin by way of Ballibay, in order to see one of his daughters who was staying with Mr. John Jackson at Creeve.* When about to embark, he put a guinea into the hand of Hope, who did not wish to pain his friend by refusing it; but, knowing his poverty, purchased some things that might be necessary for him on his voyage, and sent them on board as a present.

When Neilson arrived in America, he formed a plan of starting a newspaper devoted to the interests of the Irish race, in order to enable him to bring out and support his wife and family. But his health began to fail rapidly. A rheumatic complaint that he had contracted as a consequence of his long imprisonment, returned with increased violence, and, on the 29th of August, 1803, he died at Poughkeepsie, a small town on the Hudson River.

Although Neilson was rash, he was exceedingly resolute in carrying out his plans. Animated by strong sympathy for the oppressed, he sacrificed his health, his property, and the worldly prospects of his wife and family, whom he loved dearly, for what he was convinced were the interests of his country. He was one of the many Ulster patriots who may have adopted a wrong course, but whose honour, honesty, and unselfish fidelity to principle, should make their memory revered by Irishmen throughout all generations.

Samuel Neilson left behind him a wife and five children. Mrs. Neilson carried on a small business with such success that she was enabled to bring up her children respectably.

* Mr. Jackson's daughter, Fanny, became wife of the Rev. John Johnston, D.D., Tullylish, and mother of the Rev. William Johnston, D.D., Belfast. Another of Mr. Jackson's daughters was married to Captain Sidney H. Rowan, second of the celebrated patriot's five sons. Dr. Madden is astray in stating that Captain Gawen Hamilton was, at the time of his death, the only surviving son of A. Hamilton-Rowan.

Miss M'Cracken states that she never saw a family regulated with so much order and neatness on such a limited income; that the children were so well trained, so affectionate, and so happy that it was a treat to spend an evening in the family circle.

William Bryson Neilson, the eldest son, was a young man of great talent, a brilliant orator, and a successful merchant. Having become partner in an extensive firm which traded in Jamaica, he went to reside in that island; but he died there of yellow fever on the 7th of February, 1817, in the twenty-third year of his age. His youngest sister was married to Mr. William Handcock, and was mother of Dr. William Neilson Handcock, well-known for his writings on statistical and economic subjects.

# JAMES HOPE.

AMES HOPE was born on the 25th of August, 1764, in the Parish of Templepatrick, in the County of Antrim. His grandfather, a Scotch Covenanter, had been driven by Episcopal persecution from his native country, and had settled in Ireland. His parents were simple, honest Presbyterians. They attended the ministry of the Rev. Isaac Patton, who, on the 9th of July, 1746, had been ordained at Lylehill—the first clergyman of the Irish Secession Church. Young Hope did not receive the advantage of an early education, as he got only fifteen weeks at school before he began to earn his bread by manual labour with the neighbouring farmers. His first master, William Bell, of Templepatrick, used in the long Winter nights to sit at the kitchen fire and read aloud extracts from the histories of Greece, Rome, Ireland, Scotland, and England, and sometimes from newspapers, which then had begun to circulate among the upper class of Ulster farmers. Hope was greatly impressed by the information he received, and, when he went to another farmer, who was named John Gibson, he became a willing pupil of his master's father, who helped him in his endeavours to learn; but, ere long, death removed his venerable instructor. Afterwards, he lived with a man named John Richey, who gave him lessons in writing. Then, on returning to Gibson, his studies were continued until he had read the Bible through.

Young Hope was at length apprenticed to a linen weaver, and he served his full time without receiving a

single reproof from his master. For the next eight and a half years, he worked at his trade for a small farmer who possessed a loom, and during this time, he attended a night school every Winter. Afterwards, he worked as a journeyman with a weaver named Mullin, whose daughter Rose—a good-looking and clever girl—became his wife, and until her death, in 1831, was a worthy and loving helpmate to her husband.

Hope began his political career by joining the Roughfort Corps of Volunteers. In 1795, he became a United Irishman, his reason being that he desired to help forward every movement that tended to restore to the people their natural right of deriving a living from the soil they tilled. Soon after he joined the Society, he was chosen delegate to a general committee in Belfast, where he met Samuel Neilson, Henry Joy M'Cracken, Thomas Russell, and other leaders of the organization. Having very soon discovered his worth, they, ever afterwards, implicitly trusted him with their secrets. Hope never became a fluent speaker, but he was able to think clearly and to act wisely, firmly, and rapidly. To his friends he was known as the "Spartan," and he was often employed by leaders of the party in difficult and dangerous missions. From 1796 till 1798, he undertook many hazardous journeys to carry messages from leader to leader, and to organize societies.

The members of these societies were, at first, almost altogether Protestants, but Charles Teeling used all his influence to persuade the Roman Catholic "Defenders" to cast their lot with the United Irishmen. In this he was successful; and, when the rebellion took place in the North, the Defenders were joined with Presbyterian and Episcopal United Irishmen. But, in the South, the Roman Catholics

regarded the insurrection as a revolt against Protestantism, and their action in those disastrous days re-kindled a spirit of religious enmity that is not yet extinct.

In 1796, Hope, accompanied by one Metcalfe—an Episcopalian—was sent by the Belfast United Irishmen to introduce the society to the working-men of Dublin. He took up his residence at Balbriggan, passed as a silk-weaver from Scotland, and formed several societies in the Irish capital. Afterwards he went to reside in the City itself, where he continued to carry on his work of organization. One of the Dublin societies had entrusted a secret of some importance to Hope's companion, which he betrayed. Hope was unjustly blamed for the imprudent act of his friend, and it was determined that both should be murdered. For this purpose, an appointment was made with them to attend a rendezvous on the banks of the canal, where six men were to drown them. Hope and his companion kept the appointment, but the leader of the gang had got drunk on his way, and the doomed men were gone from the place of meeting before he had got sufficiently refreshed in the public-house. Next day, when Hope appeared at his work, he saw his employer, who was in the secrets of the organization, change colour. On enquiring what was the matter, the truth came out. Hope easily established his innocence, and preserved his influence with the leaders of his party; but acts such as had been contemplated in his case, were very injurious to the cause with which the United Irishmen were identified.

On another occasion, a man named Connell persuaded Hope to accompany himself, his son, and some others for a walk. Being joined by a number of men who appeared in answer to a signal, Hope was informed that they were going to "lift some arms," and that they wanted his "Northern

tongue" to give the word of command. But Hope saw at once that they were on a mere robbing expedition, and he resolved to frustrate their plans. Pretending to consent, he got a blunderbuss from one of the party, drew the charge, and re-loaded it himself. Then he put the muzzle to Connell's breast, and shouted out to his comrades that they could not save him, for if one of the party moved he would be a dead man. Compelling Connell to walk on in front, he warned the others not to come near. When they arrived within a short distance of the watch, he made Connell stand. Then walking backwards till out of reach of the gang, he threw the blunderbuss into a field and took to his heels. Thus Hope dealt with members of his own party who wished to play at robbery or murder. He declares solemnly that the United Irishmen never advocated assassination, and that, whenever it did take place, it was the work of individuals—not of the organization. Some time afterwards, when Hope paid a visit to Kilmainham in order to deliver a message to certain prisoners, he saw Connell, who had meanwhile been sentenced to death for highway robbery.

As circumstances demanded, Hope passed backward and forwards from Dublin to Belfast. He formed a county committee in Castleblayney and societies in Maguire's Bridge Clones, Enniskillen, and many other places. Once, when in Roscommon, he took the disguise of a Sergeant, and enlisted a United Irishman in the dock; then he successfully claimed him as a recruit. On this particular organizing expedition, he travelled more than 700 miles.

Notwithstanding his poverty, James Hope was faithful to his friends, and above corruption. The authorities being well aware that he knew the secrets of his leaders, offered him, through Mr. Ferris Martin, of Ballynahinch a sum of

£500 if he would give such evidence against Neilson, M'Cracken, and Russell as would lead to their capital conviction. Hope asked time to consider the proposal, but he immediately communicated its import to the parties against whom he was asked to inform. In order that they might hear his negotiations, he concealed them in a closet, while he gave Mr. Martin an interview in an adjoining room. On that occasion, he learned that the money would be paid by Lord Hillsborough. Hope then said he would take further time to consider the matter, and thus got rid of Martin.

At last, the leaders of the United Irishmen, despairing of getting their grievances redressed by the Irish Parliament, most foolishly and most unfortunately determined to rise in rebellion. Thomas Russell was appointed General for the County Down; but, when the time drew near, he was a prisoner in Dublin. It is said that the Rev. William S. Dickson, D.D., was appointed to act in his stead. Robert Simms was chosen general for Antrim, and it was arranged between him and another leader that James Hope should attend either one or other as aide-de-camp. At the time appointed for the insurrection, Simms refused to take the field, and, although the South had risen on the 23rd of May, he kept the society in suspense. The people grew impatient, and Hope told him plainly that an irregular movement could not be long prevented. Then Simms called a meeting of the Colonels and resigned his position.

As it was now imperatively necessary to communicate with the County Down leaders, M'Cracken entrusted Hope with a letter to Dr. Dickson. Hope went to John Hughes, of Belfast (afterwards discovered to be an informer) who was the medium of communication between Down and Antrim, and who knew where all the local leaders of the

United Irishmen could be found. It was early in the morning when he called, and Hughes came into the room half-dressed, wringing his hands in great apparent agitation. "Our leaders," said he, "have deserted us, and there is only one way to stop their career of treachery, and that is to have them arrested. You have done much for the cause, but no service equal to that of lodging information against them." Hope drew a pistol from his pocket, and told Hughes that if he were not so near his wife and children, he would never speak those words again. Then Hughes turned the matter into a jest, said he was only trying the firmness of his visitor, and stated that Dr. Dickson was in a house in Church Lane. But Hope, having failed to find him there and in another place to which Hughes directed him, went home. That very day Dr. Dickson had been arrested, and Hughes knew quite well that he was not in the neighbourhood.

Next day, Hope returned to Belfast and found it strongly guarded by the military. In High Street they were preparing to flog some unfortunate patriots, and he saw Colonel Barber, with a number of officers, walking in front of the Exchange. He found Hughes in great apparent agitation. One of his clerks came in and told them that the soldiers were flogging Kelso. Then a servant girl ran into the room and said Kelso had been taken down, and was telling all he knew. A moment afterwards Colonel Barber and the officers moved towards Bridge Street. Hughes pretended to be terribly alarmed lest the soldiers should search his house. "What ails you?" said Hope; "you need not be frightened." Hughes then showed him a strong linen bag full of musket balls and some packages of gunpowder. "I'll ease you of that," said Hope, and, taking the bag on his back, he carried

it down stairs. The clerk warned him of the risk he ran, and said that, if he were discovered, Barber would hang him from a lamp post. But Hope went on courageously with his packages, carried them along the street, and put them into a bag that he had previously left at a shop in Bridge Street. Then he boldly carried his bundle up North Street to a carman's yard, when he left it in charge of a man named Scott, while he went away himself for some other things—two swords, a green jacket, and the colours under which they afterwards fought at Antrim. Returning with these things, he and Scott packed them up in as small bulk as possible, and then marched along with a body of town yeomen that happened to be passing—just as if under their protection. After a time Hope and his companion quickened their pace, struck off the high road by Shankhill, and succeeded in safely reaching the mountains.

As Hope knew well the folly of an insurrection, he had not hitherto accepted of any command in the rebel army, but when his companions were called to arms, he was not the man to desert them, and he joined the forces of Henry Joy M'Cracken, who had been appointed to the position resigned by Robert Simms. On the 7th of June, M'Cracken marched to attack Antrim, and Hope went in the very front with a small band of Roughfort Volunteers, most of them his personal friends, who were commanded by John M'Gladdery.* They marched in three files six deep. Then followed the men of Templepatrick, and Carnmoney, and Killead. As they entered the town, they met another division coming in by the Carrickfergus Road. Thus reinforced, M'Cracken

*The attack on Antrim has been already described in M'Cracken's life; but as these biographies appeared at first in different newspapers, I wished to have each complete in itself.

pressed onwards in face of a storm of bullets. Repulsing the royal cavalry, he gained a secure position in the Churchyard. Just then in the midst of a terrific fusilade, a young girl ran along the street and through the rebel ranks, to point out to M'Cracken a loop-hole in the wall which it might be important for him to utilize.

The rebel pikemen now pressed forward. They overpowered the yeomen, and drove them behind the wall of the Masareene demesne. The cavalry of Colonel Lumley charged in vain and being repulsed, fled across the river. The Colonel himself was wounded, and Captain Watson, in order to save his life, made his horse jump over the parapet of the bridge. One hour after M'Cracken attacked Antrim, he had captured the guns, driven the royal troops from the street, and to all appearance had gained a decisive victory.

Meanwhile the yeomen, from the place of refuge behind the Castle wall, kept up a desultory fire, and M'Cracken, to make his victory complete, determined to dislodge them. Leaving Hope with his "Spartan Band," in the churchyard, he led a party to attack the yeomen in their rear. Just then a reinforcement of United Irishmen, 500 strong, arrived from Randalstown, which, after a sharp conflict, they had captured. As they entered Antrim, they saw the royal cavalry retreating, and ignorantly concluded that they were about to charge some division of the United Irishmen. Hesitating at first, their hesitancy soon became a panic.

Samuel Orr, their leader, ordered a retreat, and the retreat became a flight. M'Cracken, being unable to prevent the panic spreading to the division he commanded, was himself compelled to follow the fugitives.

Meanwhile, Hope and his "Spartans" still held their ground in the churchyard; but, just then, the royal army

received from Belfast and Blaris camp, very strong reinforcements of both infantry and cavalry. Seeing these approaching, Hope knew that all was lost; but he determined to secure a safe retreat by a bold movement. He marched his detachment, with colours flying, right towards the advancing troops, as if about to charge them, and they drew up to receive the expected onslaught. Then he suddenly turned, and marching backwards through Antrim, made good his retreat to Donegore.

After the rebellion failed, Hope returned to his work. No positive information seems to have been sworn against him, and he escaped the fate suffered by many of his brave companions. But still he was a marked man, and for years had to move about from place to place in order to avoid his enemies.

He remained in the North till November. Then he proceeded to Dublin, where he was joined by his wife and child. For some time, he worked as a cotton-weaver. Afterwards, he found employment with Mr. Charles Teeling, who had established a bleach green at Nawl, County Meath. Finding that information had been lodged against him, he returned to Dublin, and for a short time possessed a small haberdasher's shop. After Neilson's liberation in 1802, Hope accompanied that patriot to the North, when he secretly visited his wife before emigrating to America. On their journey back they went through Ballybay to see one of Neilson's daughters, who was on a visit with Mr. John Jackson, of Crieve, grandfather of Rev. William Johnston, D.D., Townsend Street, Belfast.

Once more "shadowed" by the authorities, Hope removed to Rathfarnham. While residing there, he assisted Robert Emmet in his abortive attempt to raise another

rebellion; but he took no part in the actual rising, as he was then trying to organize the malcontents of County Down. One of the witnesses against Emmet, named Fleming, had often been sent with arms to the depôt by Hope, but he never mentioned the matter in his informations. Mrs. Hope seemed to be animated by a spirit similar to her husband, and was possessed of similar courage. Happening to find out that a certain family in Dublin were suspected by the authorities, she went to their house and carried away a large quantity of ball-cartridges, which she threw into the "Basin."

After this, Hope sometimes worked in Dublin, and sometimes in its neighbourhood. Once he paid a debt of £13 for a poor family to save them from ruin. When the accession to office of Fox and Greville, in 1806, changed the policy of the Government, Mrs. Hope sent a memorial to the Duke of Bedford in her own name, admitting that her husband had fought on the side of the people, driven unwillingly to rebellion like thousands of others. She was given to understand that he would be permitted to take his chance with the civil laws. Acting on that assurance, he returned to the North. For some time he was employed by the M'Crackens; afterwards for nine years he worked with an Englishman named Tucker—generally near Larne. Leaving him, he went to reside in Belfast. Having learned to keep accounts, he acted for many years as a clerk with Mr. Joseph Smyth, the well-known publisher of the Belfast Almanac.

In 1831, Mrs. Hope died, and her husband often stated that with her his happiness was buried in the grave. The following is an extract from a poem in which he bewailed his loss:—

"The sweetest music on the ear
That ever mortal heard,
Or the sublimest thought expressed
By any earthly bard,

Is but a prelude to the praise
Where blessed spirits sing—
'Oh grave, where is thy victory?
Oh death, where is thy sting?'

. . . . . .

Tho' we have parted oft in grief,
Our meeting still was dear;
But then we'll meet beyond the reach
Of either hope or fear.
As fellow angels we shall meet,
And not as man and wife,
United by a purer tie
For an eternal life."

Hope wrote many poems, some of which are included in Dr. Madden's collection. Besides, in 1843, he furnished Madden with an autobiography and with copious notes for his "Lives of United Irishmen." This historian says that Hope was one of nature's noblemen, and one of the finest specimens of his class whom he had met. "I had," says he, "an opportunity of seeing the qualities of this man strikingly displayed on a dreary journey in his company between Belfast and Antrim, on a most tempestuous night in the depth of winter, when we arrived at our journey's end, (after visiting the scene of that struggle at Antrim in which he had taken so prominent a part five and forty years before), so benumbed with cold and wet, as scarcely to have the power of motion."

James Hope died in 1847, having attained to the ripe age of eighty-three. Although occupying but an humble position, he was trusted implicitly by the leaders of a great movement, and he exhibited all the determination and uprightness of a true Presbyterian. He was of medium height, slightly but firmly built. One of his sons, Henry

Joy M'Cracken Hope [1809—1872] wrote poetry. Some of his hymns are included in Dr. W. F. Stevenson's collection. Another son, Luke Mullan Hope [1794—1827] was editor of the *Rushlight*.

James Hope was buried in Malusk graveyard, where his tombstone is still standing. My friend, Mr. William F. M'Kinney, has very kindly copied the inscription, which is as follows:—

Erected

TO THE MEMORY OF

JAMES HOPE,

WHO WAS BORN IN 1764, AND DIED IN 1847,

ONE OF NATURE'S NOBLEST WORKS—

AN HONEST MAN,

STEADFAST IN FAITH, AND ALWAYS HOPEFUL

IN DIVINE PROTECTION.

IN THE BEST ERA OF HIS COUNTRY'S HISTORY

A SOLDIER IN HER CAUSE,

AND IN THE WORST OF TIMES, STILL FAITHFUL TO IT;

EVER TRUE TO HIMSELF AND TO THOSE

WHO TRUSTED IN HIM, HE REMAINED TO THE LAST

UNCHANGED AND UNCHANGEABLE

IN HIS FIDELITY.

# REV. JAMES PORTER.

JAMES PORTER was born in 1753, about half-a-mile from Ballindrait, a village situated between Lifford and Raphoe, in a beautiful valley through which the Deele slowly meanders around the base of heath-clad Croghan.

The Porter family had, for several generations, resided near Ballindrait, and they have been distinguished in the persons of Miss Jane Porter, the novelist, and Sir Robert K. Porter, the artist and diplomatist. The last representatives of the name, who resided in this locality, lived in the house now occupied by Mr. Alex. Weir. But the residence of the patriot's father was at Tamna Wood, which is near Ballindrait School-house.

James Porter was son of a Presbyterian farmer and mill-owner*, and was the eldest of a family that consisted of four sons and four daughters. When a boy he was distinguished for the rapidity with which he acquired knowledge, and the extent of his attainments. Having left school, he began to work on his father's farm, and, cultivating a taste for

*In 1768-9. a map and survey were made of the Lifford Estate of Abraham Creighton, Baron Erne. From these it appears that James Porter was then tenant of a small farm at Tamna Wood, and had a "tuck" mill at Ballindrait, on the north bank of the Deele, a few yards west of the bridge. The water power of this mill must have been the same as is now used by Mr. Robert MacBeth, although his mills are on the south bank, inasmuch as there could not be two weirs on this part of a stream so sluggish as the Deele, up which the tide ascends to the very bridge at Ballindrait.

mechanics, was soon able to make most of the repairs necessary in the machinery of the mill. During the winter evenings he read books and added to his rapidly increasing knowledge. There still exists at Ballindrait a beautifully engraved sun-dial, with the following inscription (kindly copied for me by Rev. A. G. Lecky, B.A.):—"By James Porter, anno 1771, for latitude 54° 58″, for Andrew Stilley."

In this way the time passed until he was twenty years of age, when his father died, and soon afterwards James left home to push his fortune. There is a tradition in Ballindrait that, having dressed himself in his "Go-to-Meeting" suit, he walked off one day without telling any person of his intention, taking with him two or three of his own shirts, which happened to be drying on a thorn hedge that he passed. After some vicissitudes, he became a tutor in the house of a gentleman in County Down. Being a remarkably fine looking young man, with good conversational powers, he won the heart of one of the young ladies of the family—Miss Anne Knox—to whom he was married in 1780, by the Rev. Robert Black, of Dromore. Afterwards, when minister of Derry, Dr. Black told the Rev. William Porter, of Limavady, that Mr. James Porter was, at the time of his marriage, the handsomest man he had ever seen. The bride's grandmother was present at the wedding, and on wishing the newly-married pair "great happiness," as is usual on such occasions, added that she saw but "small signs of it."

Soon after his marriage, Mr. Porter opened a school in Drogheda. There he continued his own studies with such assiduity and success, that, about 1784, he was enabled to enter the Divinity classes of Glasgow University—his previously-acquired attainments being accepted by the Presbytery as equivalent to a degree in Arts. After

studying there for three sessions, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Bangor. The Rev. Classon Porter states, that, soon afterwards, he was an unsuccessful candidate for the Congregation of Ballindrait. But certainly he could not have been *then* a candidate for that congregation, as its minister, the Rev. John Marshall, did not die till 1795, and never had an assistant. Soon after Mr. Porter was licensed, he received a call to Greyabbey, then vacant by the resignation of Dr. Stevenson, in which charge he was ordained on the 31st of July, 1787, being thirty-four years of age.

His yearly income may have then been about £50 of stipend and £12 of Royal Bounty, but in 1792 the Government grant was raised to a sum sufficient to pay every minister about £32 annually. Like many clergymen of our Church, Mr. Porter cultivated a farm. In this avocation his mechanical tastes came into operation, and he constructed many models of improved agricultural implements. At the same time, he prosecuted his literary, scientific, and theological studies with enthusiasm. He gathered an extensive library. He bought or constructed instruments necessary for performing physical experiments. And, above all, he attended most diligently to the duties of his congregation. He carefully prepared his sermons, preached with great power and eloquence, visited regularly, and so endeared himself to the affections of his people that, even yet, his memory is held in the highest esteem throughout the whole district.

It does not seem that at first he took any prominent part in politics. He joined the Volunteers, but never aspired to the position of a leader among them. His tastes at this period seemed to be more literary and scientific. He often delivered lectures on Natural Philosophy, and performed

experiments by way of illustration.* These lectures were exceedingly popular, and were sometimes attended by members of Lord Londonderry's family. Happy for James Porter had he kept to literature, science, and theology, and left politics to others! But he was a kind-hearted, unselfish man, and he was pained by the oppression of the people among whom he lived. For, at that time, tenant-farmers were little better than serfs, and the legalized robberies committed by landlords and rectors had driven them to the verge of rebellion. Indeed it appears that the general oppression inflicted by the State was not nearly so galling as the particular oppression of those who claimed the fruits of their labours and administered "justice" among them.

But there is no evidence to show that Mr. Porter ever became a United Irishman, or did anything more unlawful than to sympathize with those who suffered political and religious oppression, and to exhibit his sympathy by attacking abuses in the press, on the platform, and sometimes even in the pulpit. In the years 1794 and 1795, he published several songs in the *Northern Star*, which, with others, were afterwards republished under the title of "Paddy's Resource." One of the most popular of Mr.

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* His great grand-daughter, Mrs. Harris, in a very interesting sketch of Mr. Porter, states that her family possess portions of an electric machine which he used in these experiments. It is now converted into a looking-glass, and has a brass plate with a suitable inscription.

Charles H. Teeling writes of Porter:—"His school was resorted to by the most ardent votaries of science, and the first in rank were proud to be numbered amongst his pupils. His discourses were plain—unostentatious—but adorned with a native simplicity of eloquence which riveted the attention of his auditors. If I have ever derived any pleasure in the pursuit of these delightful theories, I owe it to the early lessons of the eloquent and scientific Porter."—*Sequel to Personal Narrative*, p. 204.

Porter's effusions was "The Exiled Irishman's Lamentation"—

> Green were the fields where my forefathers dwelt.
> Tho' our farm it was small, yet comforts we felt.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> At length came the day when our lease did expire,
> And fain would I live where before lived my sire;
> But, ah! well-a-day! I was forced to retire.

At this period there were neither police nor stipendiary magistrates, and accordingly the maintenance of order and the local administration of justice was in the hands of landlords, agents, and rectors, who were often guided by the information of spies and base informers, that accused the innocent as well as the guilty.

Mr. Porter's sympathy was touched, and his anger aroused by the treatment experienced by his friends the farmers, and he applied the lash of satire to some of their oppressors in a series of letters, signed "Billy Bluff," which, in 1796, appeared in the *Northern Star*. These letters were then circulated far and wide; they have been several times reprinted, and they present the very best picture that we have of the relations that prevailed between landlord and tenant during the latter part of the last century. In attacking a system, Mr. Porter held up to ridicule the persons by whom that system was represented. "Lord Mountmumble," represented the Earl of Londonderry; "Squire Firebrand," Mr. Montgomery, of Greyabbey (not the Rev. J. Cleland, as stated by some historians), and "Billy Bluff," one Billy Lowry, bailiff and spy on Mr. Montgomery's estate. Lord Londonderry recognised his own likeness, and, it is generally believed, awaited patiently the time when he would be revenged.

In the same year Mr. Porter travelled through Ulster delivering lectures on Astronomy and Natural Philosophy. Doubtless these lectures were often tinged with politics ; and, as Mr. Porter was a most persuasive orator, and had great influence with young men, his public addresses were an important factor in arousing the people to a due sense of the oppression under which they laboured.

I am indebted to Mr. William F. M'Kinney for a copy of the following letter, which was written at this time by Mr. Porter to Samuel Thompson, a County Antrim poet:—

"DEAR SIR,—The reason why I did not answer your obliging letter that I received at Doagh, was, that I had some expectations *then* of seeing you at Carngranny on my way to Antrim; other matters turned up; new arrangements and engagements took place, which put *that* out of my power, and almost put it out of my power to write to you or to any one else. You have no idea of the time and fatigue necessarily attending an excursion through the solar system, especially as we poor philosophers move slowly and heavily along, while the sons of Parnassus can wing their way through all the regions of space in as little time as will expend a tent of ink, and, smiling, view worlds of their own creation.

"Be so good as to send 21 copies of your poems to the *Star* office, directed to me. I will get them disposed of, and pay you for them.

"The first day I come into Belfast again, I will have the pamphlet for you. I hope you have not forgot the song which you promised me.

"I remain, dear sir, your very humble servant,

"JAS. PORTER.

"Belfast, Feb. 15th, 1796."

Early in 1797, Mr. Porter published another series of letters in the *Northern Star*, bearing the signature of "Sydney," and addressed to the Marquis of Downshire. Although they contain some strong language, charging Mr. Pitt with bringing the country to the verge of destruction, yet invective quite as fierce could be found in Coleridge's *Fire, Famine, and Slaughter*, written a short time previously. The following extract may serve as a specimen :—

"You will talk of *Ireland*—of *Ireland*, my Lord, not of the blood-thirsty, supercilious, unprincipled ascendancy, who watch over the public that they may destroy every thing great and good in the mind of man; who herd together for the purpose of forging heavier chains for their country; who distrust the people; belie their spirit; scoff at their complaints, and imprudently call themselves *Ireland*. Your duty and inclination will concur in leaving off this deceitful veil; your sovereign will know the truth from your own lips; he will hear that a few proud aristocrats hold the representation of the country in their own hands; that three-fourths of the people are excluded from participating in the benefits of the constitution; that 800,000 Northerns are insulted and reviled because they talk of Emancipation, Union, and Reform; and that forced oaths, overflowing bastiles, and foreign troops, are the only means taken for extorting loyalty from his Irish subjects."

Towards the end of 1796, a French fleet that was carrying an army to invade Ireland was dispersed by a storm, and soon afterwards the Government appointed a thanksgiving for this deliverance. On the appointed day, which was Thursday, the 16th of February, 1797, Mr. Porter preached a sermon, in which he tried to prove that the Government were saved from disaster by the intervention of Providence,

working through the elements, and not by their own foresight or the valour of their army. The inference to be drawn was that inasmuch as the Government might not be provided with a storm to scatter the next fleet of invaders, the people ought to "unite" to protect themselves. This sermon he afterwards published under the title *Wind and Weather*.

Although Mr. Porter had kept clear of treason, he knew well that he was exceedingly obnoxious to the local authorities. Accordingly, when the insurrection broke out in 1798, he retired to a place of concealment in the neighbourhood, which he sometimes ventured to leave by night to visit his family. Being soon discovered, he was arrested. First, he was brought to Belfast and then to Newtownards, where he was tried by court-martial on the charge of assisting to take a military despatch from a post boy. Mr. Porter solemnly denied the truth of this accusation, and the boy refused to swear to his identity. A paid informer was then produced, who testified all that was necessary. On the unsupported evidence of this wretch, Mr. Porter was condemned. After his condemnation, according to an oft-quoted MS., he addressed the Court as follows:—"Gentlemen, during the course of this mock trial I was repeatedly interrupted when putting questions to that self-convicted witness, who stands before you to swear away my life and the lives of other men to save his own; and I do most solemnly appeal to you as to the dreadful injustice of passing sentence of death on such evidence. You were much disappointed when the post boy could not identify me, and he was the only person who could recognise the individual who committed the offence. But because there was a large reward offered for my apprehension, you were determined you would find a person who should accomplish your purpose, although at the expense of violating

everything sacred in a court of justice; else why put me on my trial and give a verdict against me on the sole testimony of a renegade and a notorious paid informer? I pray God He may open your eyes to the iniquitous evidence now before you, or you will be guilty of the blood of an innocent man, and base gold will prove to be the cause of my destruction, and the unjust judgment will be registered in the records of heaven, with tenfold vengeance on your own heads when you shall appear before the Great Judge of the quick and the dead. Therefore pause, gentlemen, before you pass the awful sentence of death upon the individual now before you, who, in the course of a laborious and active life, never concealed his sentiments, but expressed the honest convictions of his mind, verbally and in writing, upon all occasions when he thought the interest of his country was concerned."

But this appeal was of no avail, and sentence was passed of death by hanging, and afterwards the usual brutal mutilation of the body. Again Mr. Porter addressed the Court to this effect:—"The verdict just pronounced by the Court has had the effect of rousing my indignation and giving energy to my spirit; and if mercy—which I do not expect from this Court—does not avert the awful calamity that awaits me, what will become of my beloved wife and children, who are endeared to me by the tenderest ties of love, duty, and affection? They will be desolate wanderers, and experience all the horrors of anguish and despair. May the God of all worlds, who is the Searcher of hearts, pardon my many weaknesses and errors; and, as I freely forgive all my enemies, may God, in His infinite mercy, forgive them also."

Thus was James Porter condemned for a crime he had never committed; but even then his wife did not relinquish hope. Accompanied by her seven children, she went to beg

her husband's life from Lord Londonderry, who possessed power of suspending executions, and who was then at his family seat in the neighbourhood. She was not admitted to his lordship's presence, but obtained an interview with his daughters, who sometimes in happier days had attended her husband's lectures. One of these ladies,* who was then labouring under a fatal disease, and soon to be numbered with the dead, tried with tears to persuade her father to grant Mr. Porter a reprieve. But all was in vain. The wound inflicted by "Billy Bluff" was too deep to be healed by the tears of a dying daughter, and Lord Londonderry permitted a clergyman of the Church, into whose membership he had been baptized himself, to be punished for a crime of which he was innocent. In one point only was the sentence to be reversed—the body was not to be mutilated after death. Miss Stewart, in deep emotion, conveyed the news to Mrs. Porter, and Mrs. Porter to her husband, who learned his fate with resignation. Before she left, the order arrived for his execution. When informed that his remains would be given to his friends, he said to his wife, "Then, my dear, I shall lie at home to-night."

Even in his execution the spirit of revenge was distinctly visible. A member of his own congregation was compelled to erect the scaffold, and it was placed in such a position that it could be distinctly seen from the meeting-house and from

*Lady Elizabeth Mary Stewart, who died in her 19th year, on the 18th of December, 1798.

I have been informed by a gentleman, whose wife was a granddaughter of Mr. Porter, that Lady Londonderry nobly used her influence in favour of mercy, and even wrote out a reprieve, but his Lordship cancelled the document. This humane lady was Lord Londonderry's second wife, and was sister of Earl Camden. Another instance of her intercession is mentioned by Dr. Halliday in a letter to Lord Charlemont. *See Charlemont Correspondence*, II., 306.

Mr. Porter's own private residence. In addition to all, many members of the congregation were compelled to be present as unwilling spectators of the execution.

Mr. Porter was hanged on the 2nd of July, 1798. His wife accompanied him to the scaffold, and was removed in a state of distraction. Mr. Porter then ascended the steps with courage and calmness. He sang the 35th Psalm, and afterwards prayed fervently. In a few minutes all was over.

His body having been brought home, was laid on a sofa. After a while one of the fatherless little ones, coming into the room, exclaimed—"Father is sleeping long to-day."

The notice of the execution which appeared in the *News-Letter* next day is exceedingly brief—"The Rev. James Porter, dissenting minister of Greyabbey, found guilty; also sentenced to be executed on the 2nd, which was put into execution yesterday at the rear of his own meeting-house at Greyabbey; head not severed."

His remains were left to rest in the churchyard of Greyabbey, where their place of repose is marked by a flat gravestone thus inscribed:—"Sacred to the memory of the Reverend James Porter, dissenting minister of Greyabbey, who departed this life July 2, 1798, aged 45 years."

It is only right to state that Mr. W. E. H. Lecky, M.P., our greatest living historian, seems to think that, in my "History of the Irish Presbyterians," I was somewhat severe upon Lord Londonderry in connection with the Porter case, and adds—"A large amount of grossly slanderous gossip about the public men of that day was circulated for party purposes. The difficulty of getting at truth about Irish history is enormously great, and it is only by the careful sifting and verifying of conflicting evidence that the gravest injustice to the dead can be avoided."

All this is perfectly true, and I admit the difficulty of judging motives. But it seems to me that, when Lord Londonderry or his son Lord Castlereagh saved many *who were undoubtedly guilty*, there must have been some very strong motive for refusing to at least *reprieve* Mr. Porter, who was certainly innocent. Rightly or wrongly, almost everybody in that district believes the motive was a desire to inflict punishment, not for robbing the postboy, but for writing "Billy Bluff."

After Mr. Porter's death a motion was brought forward in the Synod to deprive his widow of the annuity to which she was entitled. When this failed to pass, the Rev. Thomas Cuming gave notice that he would next year move, "That if any contributor to the widows' fund shall die by suicide, duelling, or the hand of public justice, his widow or family shall not be considered as entitled to any advantage from the said fund." But next year Mr. Cuming withdrew his notice, Mrs. Porter's claims were admitted, the arrears discharged, and the annuity regularly paid until her death, which took place in Belfast, on the 3rd November, 1823.*

For some years after Mr. Porter's death his widow and daughters resided in a small cottage near Greyabbey. The children were accustomed to run about barefoot; but so distinguished were they in appearance, that on more than one occasion they arrested the attention of Lord Londonderry's family when driving past. The carriage was stopped, and the children questioned. But being previously warned by their mother, they carefully refrained from revealing their identity.

* Madden places her death in the previous year, but the date I have given is correct, being taken from the report of the Presbytery of Bangor presented to the Synod in 1824.

Mr. Porter's family consisted of two sons and six daughters, five of whom lived to years of maturity. His eldest son, Alexander, carried colours at Ballynahinch, and held them up to the last, even when torn to shreds by a storm of bullets. After the defeat of the insurgents, he fled to Ballindrait, where he was recognised by a soldier, who nobly kept his secret, and refused to earn the reward of an informer. His brother James went to the same place of safety, and they were both concealed by their father's cousin, Andrew Stilley, in the house of Donald M'Ginley, a tailor, who resided in Guystown, until they succeeded in escaping to America. There the eldest rose to the rank of judge,* and the second became Attorney-General for the State of Louisiana. One of Mr. Porter's daughters went to her brother, the judge, in America. Mr. W. D. Henderson, of Belfast; Rev. John Wightman, of Holywood; Rev. James Templeton, of Ballywalter; and Rev. Andrew Goudy, of Ballywalter, were each married to one of the other four surviving daughters. Mr. Goudy's son, the Rev. Alexander Porter Goudy, D.D., of Strabane, was the first minister of the General Assembly who was able to meet Dr. Cooke on equal terms, and curb his dictatorial power.

Catherine, sister of the Rev. James Porter, born 1770, and died 1850, was married to the Rev. Ephraim Stevenson, of Enniskillen. Their grandson, the Rev. James S. Denham, was minister of Second Holywood. Many of Mr. Porter's descendants now occupy positions of great respectability and influence; and they seem to possess in a remarkable degree the talents of their illustrious ancestor.

*The Hon. Alexander Porter died on the 13th of January, 1844. He helped to frame the Constitution of Louisiana, and was a representative of that State in the Senate of the United States.

# REV. WILLIAM STEEL DICKSON, D.D.

DR. DICKSON (for I shall give him all along the name by which he is known to the world) was the eldest son of John Dickson, of Ballycraigy, in the parish of Carnmoney, near Belfast. At his baptism, on the 30th of December, 1744, he received the name "William."* His second name seems to have been added subsequently by either himself or his parents. Dr. Dickson's first educational seminary was one of the ordinary hedge schools which were then almost the only seats of learning in country districts throughout Ireland. Afterwards he was taught classics, metaphysics, and theology by the Rev. Robert White, minister of the neighbouring parish of Templepatrick, by whom he was also led to read and think for himself.

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*Mr. W. I. Addison, who very kindly examined the records of Glasgow University on my behalf, informs me that Dr. Dickson matriculated in 1763, as *William*, eldest son of John Dickson; but that, in 1784, the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him as *William Steel* Dickson.

Evidently Dr. Dickson was not quite certain about his own age. In his *Narrative*, p. 3, he says that he entered Glasgow College when in his seventeenth year; but further on, p. 53, note, he states that, on the 5th of June, 1798, he was in the fifth month of his fifty-third year. If he matriculated the year he entered college, as is generally done, it is impossible to reconcile these statements, and neither agrees with the registry of his baptism, which I have examined in the Session Book of Carnmoney. The date of his *birth* is not given in that record; but I have seen it stated that it was on the 25th of December, 1744. The usual University course of Irish Presbyterian candidates for the ministry was then four sessions; and the fact that Dr. Dickson was licensed in 1767 would indicate that he matriculated the year he entered college.

Dr. Dickson became a matriculated student of Glasgow University in 1763 when about nineteen years of age. Among his professors in this seminary were Dr. Adam Smith and Mr. John Millar. With Mr. Millar he soon came to be on terms of friendly intimacy, and from him he imbibed the political principles which he afterwards advocated so powerfully, and for which he suffered so severely.

By advice of his friend, Mr. White, he became a candidate for the office of the ministry in the Church of his fathers, and in March, 1767, he was licensed to preach the Gospel. At first he does not seem to have been either particularly powerful as a speaker or fortunate as a candidate, since he did not receive a call to a stated charge until he had been four years a licentiate. During the intervening period, he had, of necessity, to make frequent excursions to vacant congregations, and in one respect, these toilsome travels on horseback were not unpleasant to a man of social instincts, as he thereby acquired the acquaintance of many families of rank and respectability in the Counties of Down and Antrim, with whom his learning, wit, and conversational powers made him a welcome guest. Among these were the family of Mr. Alexander Stewart—grandfather of the celebrated Viscount Castlereagh.

After four years of licentiate labour, Dr. Dickson received a call from Ballyhalbert, County Down, and on the 6th of March, 1771, he was ordained its pastor. Soon afterwards, he bought a farm, and, ere long, he married Miss Isabella Gamble, a young lady who was born of a "genteel family, brought up in affluence, and liberally educated." In this rural retreat, he devoted himself with ardour to general study, and to the particular duties of his office. He visited regularly the people of his charge. He prepared his sermons carefully,

and although he had been unpopular or unfortunate as a probationer, he became afterwards a most powerful and popular preacher. He often delivered special sermons against special sins—one against the practice of cock-fighting is said to have put an end to that brutal sport in the neighbourhood. He was, however, more of a politician than the Rev. James Porter, whom he resembled in his eloquence, his enthusiasm, and his misfortunes.

When Great Britain, in 1775, went to war with her American colonies, Dr. Dickson thought the action of the Government "unnatural, impolitic, and unprincipled." Had he lived in later times, he would probably have concealed his views; but living in an age when Presbyterians detested dissimulation, he openly expressed his opinions regarding the action of the Government. On two days appointed as public fasts he preached on subjects connected with the principles and probable consequences of the war. These sermons he printed and published, entitling one *The Advantages of National Repentance*, and the other, *The Ruinous Effects of Civil War*. They were read with avidity, and were found by the Protestant public "less pestilential" than they had been represented by the Tory party before publication.

France and Spain now espoused the American cause. Their fleets sailed triumphantly over the British seas and threatened the unprotected seaports. The Government having declared their inability to protect Ireland, the Irish people sprang to arms to defend themselves. Belfast took the lead, and soon every village had its company of volunteers. The lawyer, the physician, and the farmer—all were soldiers. Even Presbyterian pastors were so powerfully inspired by the patriotism of the day that in several places, "The rusty black was exchanged for the glowing scarlet, and the title of

'Reverend' for that of 'Captain.'" A minister would sometimes enter the pulpit in full uniform, and laying down his sword, take up the Bible, and preach an eloquent sermon, which the numerous volunteers in his audience would applaud with the stocks of their guns. This wave of enthusiastic loyalty reached even the Catholic Celts, who in great numbers offered their services; but their offers were insultingly rejected, and the volunteers were kept a Protestant body, who duly celebrated the victory of the Boyne and the relief of Londonderry. As Dr. Dickson considered this exclusion both unwise and unfair, he published his views in a sermon that he had preached before the Echliville Volunteers in March, 1787, on *The Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms in Time of Public Danger.* Not many months afterwards an exceedingly powerful and eloquent discourse, on appearing in glory with Christ, which he preached in Portaferry, on the occasion of the death of the Rev. James Armstrong, maternal grandfather of the celebrated Dr. Stevenson, led to his receiving a call from that congregation. He resigned Ballyhalbert on the 1st of February, 1780, and, soon afterwards, was installed minister of Portaferry.

Dr. Dickson now threw himself into the Volunteer movement with all the ardour of his enthusiastic nature. The great objects of the Volunteers were (1) to obtain the independence of the Irish Parliament, and (2), when this was accomplished in 1782, to secure its reform, a measure that was absolutely necessary, as nearly three-fourths of the members were merely the nominees of Episcopal landlords. But, when the war was over, the ruling class, no longer fearing the Volunteers, clung tenaciously to their power.

In 1782 Dr. Dickson was present at a sham fight, repre-

senting an attack on Belfast, where young Robert Stewart' afterwards Viscount Castlereagh, at the head of a company of boys, so greatly distinguished himself that high hopes were raised of his future greatness.

A general election took place in 1783, and the persecuted Presbyterians of Ulster, more loyal then to their creed and their country than in these days of degeneracy, were able to return a few members who at least *professed* to represent their interests. Roley and O'Neill were successful in Antrim, and Jones and Sharman in Lisburn, but Mr. Robert Stewart, sen., was defeated in County Down. In this election Dr. Dickson took an active part, and a few days before its close, brought up forty freeholders to support Mr. Stewart. They were all well mounted, and, after having proudly paraded the town in Indian file, drew up two deep before the candidate's lodgings. On seeing such a large body of voters, young Robert Stewart rushed out in a transport of delight, and throwing his arms round the neck of Dr. Dickson's horse, asked him were all these for his father. "Yes, my dear boy," was the reply, and then young Stewart dashed into the house, and in an instant returned calling to his father—"See what Mr. Dickson has brought! I would rather be at the head of such a yeomanry than be the first lord ever a king created." But Dr. Dickson's efforts were vain. The landlords triumphed, and there came a time when both the candidate and his son, deserting the cause of the Presbyterian farmers, by whom they were then supported, became oppressive in their own tyranny.*

But this change in their principles did not take place

*In 1784 the distinguished talents of Dr. Dickson were recognised by the University of Glasgow in conferring upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

for a time. Robert Stewart, sen., became Lord Londonderry, and in 1790, the younger Robert succeeded after a poll of 69 days and the outlay of £60,000 in winning the second seat of the county, in spite of the combined efforts of the Government and the Episcopal aristocracy. Again, Dr. Dickson took an active part in the political strife. For nearly three months he was on horseback every day, and seldom slept in his own house at night. He rode one horse to death, reduced another to half his value, and besides spent on electioneering purposes £50 of his own money, part of which he was compelled to borrow, but he had the consolation of being a powerful factor in securing the victory.

At the suggestion of Lord Charlemont a Whig Club was formed in Belfast early in the year 1790, and Mr. Robert Stewart became a prominent member. But the more ardent spirits of the neighbourhood thought that these Whig aristocrats, who posed as reformers, did not sincerely desire to overthrow the power of their class and creed by procuring Parliamentary reform. Indeed, some time previously, Lord Charlemont had declared in a letter to the Rev. Dr. Crawford that the people were perfectly free, and since freedom was all that they had desired, they ought to be content. Despairing of victory under such leaders, Samuel Nelson, son of the Presbyterian clergyman of Ballyroney, founded, in October, 1791, a society of "United Irishmen," with the object of joining all his countrymen together in support of that Parliamentary reform so absolutely necessary for the rights of the people and the very existence of the Irish legislature. Impressed by a sense of the importance of the new organization as a means to an end, Dr. Dickson, in December, 1791, took the test of a United Irishman, in presence of the first society that had been ever formed in Belfast. But he states that he

is not certain whether he was ever enrolled as a member, and that he never attended any other regular meeting of the organization.

On the 14th of July, 1792, the subject of Catholic Emancipation was discussed at a meeting of Volunteers held in Belfast. One party, on account of the alleged ignorance of Irish Roman Catholics, advocated a gradual emancipation, but Dr. Dickson, by his arguments and eloquence, caused the meeting to adopt a resolution in favour of emancipation total and immediate.

The same year, he published a pamphlet on Psalmody, in which he showed Scriptural authority for Church music, deplored the fact that it was not cultivated as it ought among Irish Presbyterians, and answered objections to proposed improvements.

Various meetings of parish and county delegates were now promoted by the United Irishmen, and on the 15th of February, 1793, a great Provincial Assembly was held in Dungannon Presbyterian Church. The pews on the ground floor were occupied by delegates, and the galleries were filled by the general public, the front row being crowded by a group of elegantly-dressed young ladies. Mr. William Sharman was chosen president, and resolutions were passed declaring against Republican government, but demanding Roman Catholic Emancipation, and a "fair and rational" representation of the people by elections frequently repeated. Dr. Dickson was one of the chief speakers, and he had "no inconsiderable share in preparing and modifying the resolutions." In the course of his speech, when making reference to a report to the effect that they desired to destroy rather than to reform, he said they were a body of men as firmly attached to the Constitution and as loyal to their

King as ever trod the earth. He abhorred such charges; but he desired to replace the government on a solid basis of Constitutional principles. So great was the impression made by his oratory, that a deputation, representing different religious denominations, requested him to preach at five o'clock the next Sunday evening. The Doctor complied, and, before the hour appointed, the house was crowded with the principal people of the place of all religious persuasions, among whom were the local clergy of the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches. To this crowded assembly Dr. Dickson preached from Joseph's advice to his brethren—"See that ye fall not out by the way"—and it is said that his sermon did much to strengthen the union of all creeds and classes in Dungannon.*

But this union was more apparent than real. Then as well as now, the lower classes of both Protestants and Roman Catholics inclined to hate one another; but that hatred was not then fostered by organizations of the people. Both parties were at that time led by their leaders to political union rather than to religious animosity. It was only the Government that then endeavoured to sow the seeds of discord.

This year Dr. Dickson had the honour of being chosen Moderator by the Synod of Ulster, and a year afterwards, as

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*The following extract from a poem of James Hope, printed in Mr. R. W. Young's *Old Belfast*, shows the spirit which animated the leaders of the party:—

"Some say that from England we want separation,
The very reverse we are ready to prove.
We want closer connection in mutual affection,
But what separates us we mean to remove.
The chain of oppression that fetters us both
To shiver in pieces we'll never be loath."

outgoing Moderator, he again occupied the pulpit of the Church of the Volunteers.

The agitation for Parliamentary reform continued for a lengthened period, but that agitation was fruitless. The members of a landlord-chosen assembly refused to hand over to the people the elective power belonging to the territorial aristocracy.

The United Irishmen saw plainly that there was no immediate prospect of the Irish Parliament reforming itself; and, encouraged by the success of the French Republicans, they, most unfortunately, determined to give up a safe though not very hopeful constitutional agitation, and prepare for a dangerous and perfectly hopeless rebellion. Much less than what has been granted in our own time would have satisfied Porter or Dickson, and yet, as Dr. Kinnear has ably pointed out, the Presbyterians of 1798 were hanged for asking what has been now obtained.

Although Dr. Dickson did not attend the society meetings of United Irishmen, he advocated their principles, was intimately associated with many of their leaders, and was, it is asserted, elected to the office of "Adjutant-General of the United Irish Forces for County Down." Doubtless this statement was never legally proven, yet it is not distinctly and definitely denied in the *Narrative*. Be this as it may, Dr. Dickson was a man of great political influence in County Down, and that influence was exercised against the landlord rulers of the country. Hence it came to pass that the pastor of Portaferry, whether he was an Irish general or only a Presbyterian clergyman, must of necessity be ruined. The ukase went forth. The informers got their cue, and soon, on the evidence of one Carr, some of Dr. Dickson's most influential hearers were arrested, as it was thought

likely that *he* might be implicated if they were condemned. But, since nothing could be proven against them, they were, after some months' imprisonment, liberated by the Attorney-General. As Carr's information "fell short of his promises," he was himself sent to prison in Dublin. When confined there Dr. Dickson overheard him state that he had been offered a thousand pounds in case such evidence were produced as would lead to the Doctor's conviction.

But the Pastor of Portaferry had a brave heart, and he returned to County Down when a less courageous man would have fled to America. He attended a meeting of gentlemen in Ballynahinch on the day appointed for a county convention, which it had been thought unwise to assemble, and there assisted in passing a resolution declaring that they sought for Parliamentary reform, and for it alone.

In the spring of 1798, Dr. Dickson spent a considerable time in Scotland with his wife's uncle, who then died. On his return to Ireland, everything he brought with him was closely examined by the authorities, even to a large tobacco-box, which they imagined might contain despatches. For some time previously, he had been troubled with biliousness and rheumatism. Having consulted a medical friend, he was advised to drink the Spa waters of Ballynahinch, and to ride daily on horseback. The former part of the advice he was unable to follow for some time; the latter part he adopted at once, as during the month of May he rode to various places to assist his brethren at their communions. But his horse was a slow traveller, and on Thursday, the 31st of May, he went to Saintfield fair with the idea of buying another. Failing to obtain such an animal as he desired, he rode to Belfast in hope of buying one off a Captain Sinclair, but the Captain being from home, Dr. Dickson was unable to

accomplish his intention. The Government authorities believed that he desired to buy a horse to serve as a charger when leading the United Irishmen to battle, and that his object in visiting Belfast was to hold a conference with the leaders of the proposed insurrection. Be this as it may, he remained over Friday night with Mr. John Coulter, of Collon, from whom he borrowed a horse that could travel more quickly than his own. Setting out early on Saturday, he rode twenty miles to Downpatrick, before eleven o'clock. Thence he proceeded to Ballee, where he preached in the afternoon, and also on Sunday and on Monday; but on both Saturday evening and Sunday evening he went home to Portaferry, returning to Ballee in the morning. On Monday, when all his Sacramental duties were discharged, he directed his course to Ballynahinch, where he purposed to drink the waters.

But meanwhile Dr. Dickson had been "shadowed" by the authorities. In Saintfield fair he saw certain officials watch his every movement. On his way to Ballee he had been interrogated in Downpatrick by a Captain Marshall, and to him he gave the following statement regarding his future movements:—"I would be found at Ballee the two following days, and in Portaferry at night; and that for some weeks afterwards I would be found at Ballynahinch from noon on Monday until the same hour on Saturday, and on the intermediate time in Portaferry, or on the road between the two places."

But, notwithstanding this information, the doom of Dr. Dickson had been determined by the authorities, whether he was guilty or innocent; and, on the evening of the 5th of June, he was arrested. Next day he was marched on foot, eight miles, to Lisburn, "under a scorching sun and enveloped

in clouds of dust." On his arrival General Goldie treated him with politeness, and permitted him to hire a conveyance to Belfast. There he was confined in a place filled with stench, called the "Black Hole," in which he had to lie on hard boards, and where he was "stunned with a continued torrent of ribaldry." From this he was removed to another place of confinement, so filthy with vermin that he was obliged, at the risk of his life, to take off the flannels that he had been wearing as a protection against rheumatism.

Ruthless retribution followed the suppression of the rash and ruinous rebellion. Even those who had never been brought to trial felt the tyranny that prevailed. Dr. Dickson and the other political prisoners were treated with fearful barbarity by the soldiers, who often threatened to take away their lives, and sometimes threw into their cells fingers and toes that they had cut off dead bodies. Spies were placed among the prisoners, who pretended to sympathise with their principles, but whose business was to report their conversation.

On several occasions Dr. Dickson was brought before two notorious representatives of the Government. One was Mr. John Pollock, Solicitor for the Crown and paymaster of informers; the other was the Rev. John Cleland, an Episcopal minister* and a magistrate, who, besides, was agent, footman,

*In a letter to Dr. Campbell written in 1798, it is stated—"The clergy of Armagh are the most loyal set of men—so active and so alert—stuffing their noses everywhere, and running about like terriers with every little tittle tattle to the commanding officers." Similar duties were performed by the Episcopalian clergy almost everywhere throughout Ulster.

The following extract from a letter written by the Rev. Edward Hudson a County Antrim Rector—to Lord Charlemont, shows how far some of these Episcopalian clergymen went in their officiousness and cruelty:—"I saw a man upwards of threescore, whose hands, drawn through the latches of his own car, were held by two soldiers whilst forty lashes were inflicted on his naked body by a clergyman who was not even a magistrate."—*Charlemont Correspondence*, p. 304.

general informer, and "master of his croppy hounds" for Lord Londonderry. Ushered into the presence of these inquisitors, Dr. Dickson was first assailed by a torrent of oaths, and then dexterously questioned with a view of leading him to criminate himself or his companions. But the Doctor was mentally far superior to either inquisitor, and although told he would be hanged the next day, did not permit himself to give expression to a single unguarded statement. On the occasion of another interview with Mr. Pollock, this gentleman expressed his sorrow that the Doctor, had not been left to himself for a few days longer, as then the Government "would have been sure of him."

It seemed as if Dr. Dickson's doom was decreed. The "Whigs" for whom he formerly fought had now to prove their loyalty by extra severity to all suspected of rebellion. Even Viscount Castlereagh, once so grateful for the Doctor's help as to embrace his very horse, was now so devoid of gratitude as to say that the greatness of the influence he had once exercised in favour of himself, was a proof that it would be dangerous to leave at liberty a man possessed of so much political power.

At this time, Dr. Dickson's eldest son was a surgeon in the navy. His second son, only fifteen years of age, drove his mother and sisters on two common wheel cars to a place of safety at Donaghadee. On his return journey, the insurgents took possession of his cars and horses. Afterwards he was arrested, and kept more than a fortnight in Downpatrick jail yard, "Exposed to a burning sun by day and the dews by night, with a wad of straw for his bed, and a great coat his only covering." Refusing to answer questions regarding the movements of his father and other suspected

persons, he was told that he might not be afraid to state all he knew, as his father had been hanged the day before. But even this cruel falsehood failed to shake the lad's determination, and he was at last admitted to bail through the humanity of Colonel Stapleton. Meanwhile the yeomanry and marines had seized upon the cattle, horses, and sheep, that were on Dr. Dickson's farm at Portaferry, and only a few of them were afterwards recovered.

About this time, a paper had been signed by some of the State prisoners in Dublin with a view to their discharge on condition of emigration. A similar paper was signed by some of the Belfast prisoners, but Dr. Dickson refused to affix his name, stating he would never assent to any document which implied that he was guilty of crimes he had never committed. Besides, he repeatedly challenged the Government to bring him to trial, but the challenge was not accepted, and the rulers of Ireland continued to punish him for crimes they were unable to prove.

In the month of July, Dr. Dickson was removed to the artillery barracks, and on the 12th of August, he was sent to a prison ship in Belfast Lough. There his place of confinement was an apartment less than five feet high, in which so many prisoners were placed, that the hot, fetid steam ascending from the doorway was felt all over the deck. Before winter set in, he was again placed in the filthy prison of Belfast, but on Christmas Day, he was sent back to the ship. Here the cold was so great that he was compelled to sit with his bedclothes round his feet; but, notwithstanding all his precautions, he had several attacks of gout and biliousness. One of his companions in misery was Mr. David B. Warden, a licentiate, who afterwards emigrated to America, and who became secretary to the American Legation in Paris.

On the 25th March, 1799, Dr. Dickson and nineteen others were removed from the prison ship, and, the next day, sent off to Fort St. George, in Scotland, where he did not arrive till the 9th of April. Of these twenty prisoners, four were Roman Catholics, six Presbyterians, and ten Episcopalians. Here each had a cell to himself; but they were generally locked up, except when at meals or exercising. However, as time wore on these rules were somewhat relaxed.

Meanwhile several officials of the Government were active in trying to discover evidence sufficient to convict Dr. Dickson; and various persons who had been accused, were offered advantages for themselves if only they would criminate him. But these efforts were fruitless; and, at last, after being confined three years and seven months, he was brought to Belfast, where, on the 13th of January, 1802, he was liberated.

For seventeen months after Dr. Dickson's arrest the Congregation of Portaferry had continued to pay his stipend; but on the 28th of November, 1799, it was declared vacant by authority of the Synod, and on the 16th of June, 1800, Mr. William Moreland was ordained its pastor. On Dr. Dickson's release Mr. Moreland at once proffered to resign, in order that the former pastor might be re-elected, but this offer the Doctor absolutely refused to accept, although now possessed of but very slender means of support. He had lost his share of Royal Bounty, about £100 a year he made from a boarding school for boys, and his stipend, which he calculates at another £100 a year. This in all probability included payments in kind, as the committee book of Portaferry shows that the congregational payments to Dr. Dickson before 1788, amounted to £17 10s a quarter, and to £20 a quarter from that period afterwards. All this was

now gone. His son—a doctor in the royal navy—who had formerly helped him, was dead, and nothing remained to him but an irregularly paid income of about £25 a year from leasehold property.

Under these cirumstances, Dr. Dickson's first idea was to emigrate; but his high and haughty spirit could not brook leaving the country with charges against him, although unproved. Accordingly he remained in Ireland, and became a candidate for Donegore, from which he was kept out by the influence of Dr. Black. Towards the end of 1802, he received a call from the newly-organized Congregation of Second Keady, and there on the 4th of March, 1803, he was duly installed. But his stipend of £50 a year was his only professional income, as the Lord Lieutenant refused to give this congregation the usual grant of Royal Bounty, in order that the Government might punish its pastor for crimes they never had proven.

Even from his brethren in the ministry Dr. Dickson received but little sympathy. In 1797, a regulation had been made to meet cases of emigration, to the effect that a minister *on leaving this kingdom* should be considered as no longer connected with the Widows' Fund. His imprisonment in Scotland was now interpreted to mean "leaving the kingdom," and, by a small majority, he was cut off from all claims on the fund, to which he had subscribed for twenty-seven years.*

In 1805, Viscount Castlereagh was again a candidate for the representation of Down. Dr. Dickson from the beginning

* After Dr. Dickson had returned to the "Kingdom," when liberated from prison, the arrears of his yearly subscription to the Widows' Fund was paid for him by a friend. Then, in accordance with a resolution of Synod, his membership was restored. Afterwards his subscription fell once more into arrears, and he was again excluded.

of the election actively opposed his candidature, and had the pleasure of seeing him rejected as "The violator of his solemn engagements, and the unblushing betrayer of his country to a foreign *sanhedrim*."

For some years afterwards Dr. Dickson seems to have devoted himself chiefly to the work of his congregation; but he attended several meetings held in the neighbourhood for promoting the cause of political reform. On returning from one of these, convened at Armagh, in 1811, he was assaulted and badly beaten. In 1812, he published his *Narrative*, of which he issued a second edition towards the end of the same year.† It was severely criticised by Dr. Black in the Synod, but its author never retracted his statements.

In January, 1814, *the Commercial Chronicle* contained an advertisement of a sheriff's sale of Dr. Dickson's interest in some property at Ringneal, County Down. But misfortunes seldom come alone, and it seems that the Doctor's health had now become so much impaired that he was unable to discharge his professional duties. Accordingly, on the 27th of June, 1815, he wrote the Presbytery of Tyrone, stating that, inasmuch as he was unable, "Through infirmity and inconvenience of situation, to attend upon the duties of the pastoral office," he resigned charge of his congregation. This resignation was accepted, and he retired to Belfast, where he lived in a cottage that was given him free of rent by Mr. Joseph Wright, an Episcopalian lawyer. There he was supported by the proceeds of a subscription, and by a

† Evidently the body of the work in this edition had not been re-printed. It consists of a portion of the first edition, with a few corrections made as the sheets passed through the press. A "Prelude" in reply to his critics was inserted at the beginning.

weekly allowance contributed by his friends. In 1816, the Rev. W. Neilson proposed his name as a candidate for the Chair of Theology in Belfast College, but the motion was unsuccessful. Mrs. Dickson died on the 15th of July, 1819, and the Rev. Alex. Gordon is of opinion that some small income ceased at her death. In 1822, Dr. Dickson was present at the meeting of Synod in Newry, and on the 29th of April, 1824, he attended a meeting of a committee appointed to examine students. One Sabbath the same year he was a worshipper in Donegall Street Church, when Mr. Acheson, the minister, failed to be present. In compliance with a request that was made to him, Dr. Dickson read a portion of Scripture and engaged in prayer, but felt himself so weak that he did not attempt to preach.

The end came on the 27th of December, 1824, when he was eighty years of age. His remains were followed by the Rev. W. D. H. M'Ewen, the Rev. Henry Montgomery, and eight or nine other friends to a pauper's grave in Clifton Street burying-ground, a few yards to the right of the entrance gate, where not even a stone marks his final resting-place. For eighteen years before the great rebellion, he possessed the friendship and esteem of the highest in the land; but, as a result of taking that political course which he honestly thought best for his creed and his country, he was cast out of society, forgotten by his friends, and treated with injustice by the leaders of the Church for which he had suffered.

# JAMES M'KNIGHT, LL.D.*

AMES M'KNIGHT is celebrated as founder of the Ulster Tenant-right agitation, which was a powerful means in producing important Acts of Parliament to protect the rights of Irish tenant farmers. A farmer's son himself, he was born in the County of Down, near Rathfriland, early in the present century. The date of that event, and the position of the house where it took place, are fixed by the following extract from a letter which he wrote on the 13th of April, 1871, to the late Mr. Robert Swan, Grallagh House, Rathfriland:—"Since the 27th day of February last I have entered on the 71st year of my age. . . . I was born within a gunshot of your family residence, in a little house on the roadside, at a spot from which all traces of human habitation have now disappeared. It was a house on the roadside, immediately beyond, but adjoining old Bob Bell's house, which you may possibly recollect."

Young M'Knight's father, although a Presbyterian, could speak the Irish language, and was fond of singing Irish songs. To this his son afterwards alluded in a letter to Sir Charles G. Duffy:—"I am passionately fond of the old Irish melodies, and have long been picking them up wherever I could find them. Indeed I was familiar with most of the airs in Moore,

*My reason for including a sketch of Dr. M'Knight's career in this series, is because the Tenant-right movement with which he was identified, sprang from a desire to remedy the same grievances that had produced rebellion fifty years previously.

before his melodies were heard of. My father had an enormous store of scraps of this kind, and when a child he used to sing them to me in Irish. You would hardly expect this from an old black-mouthed Presbyterian."

At that time most of the small farmers in Ulster were weavers as well as tillers of the soil, and these manufacturing agriculturists were sometimes possessed of considerable information. Very often a weaver kept a book before him on the loom, and, reading a passage now and again, meditated on its import as he went on with his labour. Thus he not only acquired information, but was led to think, and thereby developed his mind. By one of these literary working men, young M'Knight was induced to study "Edwards on the Will." After mastering this treatise, he had no difficulty with other metaphysical or theological works, and very soon he became renowned throughout the neighbourhood for his learning. Thus led to a defined study, he determined to enter college to prepare for the ministry of the Irish Presbyterian Church. He read Latin and Greek with a Mr. Henderson, of Newry, and in November, 1825, entered the collegiate department of the old Royal Academical Institution. In that seminary he soon became distinguished as a linguist and a metaphysician; but he lacked that fluent utterance necessary to secure success as a public speaker. It is related that once, when called upon by Professor Hanna to lead in prayer, he said, "Doctor, please pray for me." The learned Professor, however, understood this request in a literal sense, and offered up an earnest prayer, not instead of his student, but for his spiritual and temporal welfare. In after life, Mr. M'Knight acquired great fluency. I have heard him myself speak powerfully and without hesitation, but he never got rid of his strong provincial accent.

When Mr. M'Knight was a second year student, Mr. Alexander Henderson, uncle of the late proprietor of the *News-Letter*, was librarian of the Society for Promoting Knowledge, which, during many years was domiciled in the Linen Hall. In November, 1826, Mr. Henderson received permission to attend college lectures for six months, and M'Knight was appointed to act as deputy during his absence. Thus it seems that James M'Knight, like many other distinguished students, earned his living by honourable work while pushing his way through college. In 1828 he passed an examination of the Theological Committee appointed by the Synod of Ulster to test the proficiency of students before entering divinity classes; but he never became a clergyman, as he finally devoted himself to journalism.

During the last year of his collegiate course, a contribution which he sent to the *News-Letter* led to his acquaintance with Mr. Mackey, the proprietor, and to his appointment on the staff of that paper. Afterwards, he became editor. The *News-Letter* was then issued only twice a-week, and consequently, the duties of an editor were by no means burdensome. Mr. M'Knight had, therefore, a good deal of spare time, and that leisure he spent in adding to his already extensive and varied learning. He read Latin, Greek, French, German, and Irish. He studied Metaphysics, History, and Theology. In all these subjects he made distinguished progress, and it stands on record that, at least on one occasion in after life, he gave private lessons to a newly-appointed professor in the language that he had been chosen to teach.

The *News-Letter* occupied then a political position midway between the Toryism of the *Ulster Times* and the Liberalism of the *Northern Whig;* but the proprietor was Conservative, and his editor, while decidedly Unionist, was

no less decidedly Liberal. The result of this difference of opinion was that Mr. M'Knight resigned his position, and, about 1846, became editor of the *Londonderry Standard.* In 1847 he was a candidate for the General Assembly's Chair of Moral Philosophy, but the Rev. William Gibson was elected. Very soon afterwards the defeated candidate received the degree of LL.D. from the University of Aberdeen, a just recognition of his literary talents.

In 1848 Dr. M'Knight returned to Belfast, and conducted the *Banner of Ulster* till 1853, when he resumed the editorship of the *Londonderry Standard.* About that time, he married Miss Macpherson, sister of the proprietor, and he remained in possession of the editorial chair until his death. Under his management, the *Standard* at one time occupied the proud position of being at the head of the Ulster Press.

It was soon after M'Knight *first* became editor of the *Standard* that he commenced the great Tenant-right agitation, which rendered him famous, and which was a most important factor in producing results that the farmers are now enjoying.

At that time a band of Tory landlords held the Parliamentary representation of Ulster. Not a single representative of the agricultural population could hope to obtain a seat. The farmer was a serf, whose rent was fixed by the landlord. He entered the "office" with fear and trembling; if he expected a visit from his agent, he had carefully to conceal any copies of the *Derry Standard* that might be in his parlour.

The Roman Catholics of the South were then occupied in prosecuting a Repeal agitation, while the Presbyterian farmers of the North stood so much in dread of eviction without compensation that they feared to face their landlords in a fight for freedom. Dr. M'Knight seemed to stand alone;

but, although opposed to the wealth and power of Ulster, and although the great majority of those for whom he fought feared to take the field, he determined to begin the battle. Accordingly, in the summer of 1846, with the assistance of a few tenant-farmers and Presbyterian clergymen, he founded a Tenant-right Association. Through the Press, and afterwards on the platform, he advocated the principles of that association with brilliant scholarship and dauntless courage. In this struggle he was ably assisted by Mr. S. M. Greer, the Rev. John Rogers, the Rev. N. M. Brown, and the Rev. John Kinnear.

Dr. Brown is still in our midst, and his eloquence is even now as persuasive as in the days of the Tenant League. Dr. Kinnear for a lengthened period led the Liberals of Donegal. Afterwards he entered Parliament, where he rendered valuable help in passing the Tenant Right Bill of 1881; and, although he has now retired from politics, he still occupies a foremost position in the fields of theological scholarship and pulpit oratory.

The agrarian movement in Ulster placed Presbyterians once more in the ranks of agitators. Some of the Southern leaders, such as Mr. Charles Gavan Duffy, hoped, through Dr. M'Knight, to win over the hitherto immoveable North to their own political principles. But Dr. M'Knight, while he readily agreed to act with the Southern leaders on a Tenant-right platform, no less steadfastly insisted that the idea of Repeal should be excluded. In a letter to Duffy, he stated that it was only by keeping to the one point of Tenant-right, that he had a decided prospect of being able to do some practical permanent good for his country. Accordingly, the political leaders of the South determined to let their Repeal movement remain in abeyance, and to join

with Ulster in demanding justice for the oppressed farmers. On this basis a union was formed, which, before long, began to show important results.

The first practical outcome of this union was seen in a Tenant-right Conference, representing the entire kingdom. It was convened by a circular, signed, among others, by Duffy, Greer, and M'Knight, and it met, on the 6th of August, 1850, in the City of Dublin. The appearance of the Ulstermen created great enthusiasm, and Dr. M'Knight was placed in the chair. His character is well described by Sir Charles G. Duffy :—

"The most indispensable element in the new organization was the Northern contingent. Dr. M'Knight was their undisputed leader. He had won the confidence of Ulster and deserved it by a genuine devotion to the interests of the tenant farmers. For their sake he transformed himself, in middle age, from a dreamer loitering in the flowered fields of literature and philosophy, into a practical man, armed with Blue Books and Acts of Parliament. He had, indeed, always a leaning to metaphysics, which gave a speculative character to his thinking, but he corrected it by constant attention to details. He was earnest, acute, well-informed, and on the social side as free from bigotry or distrust as any man with his discipline or experience could be expected to be. He was the incarnation of cautious good sense, little disturbed by passion or prejudice, and he entered into the League fixedly determined that it should never fail from any fault of his."

One of the secretaries to this meeting was the Rev. William Dobbin, the respected senior minister of Annaghlone, so well known for his sound theological scholarship, which he has exhibited in several powerful pamphlets and in other publications.

The resolutions that were passed, formulated a demand from the farmers for fair rents, free sale, and fixity of tenure. But these claims were regarded by most of the English newspapers as absurd and impracticable. The London *Standard* asserted that the Presbyterian clergy who joined in putting forward such demands, were freed from "the proper restraints of morality and decency."

The first result of this conference was the formation of a Tenant League, under whose auspices numerous popular meetings were held throughout all Ireland. At many of these demonstrations Dr. M'Knight was a speaker. Wherever he went, he dwelt strongly on the necessity for union, and pointed out the advantages that had sprung from it hitherto in their struggle. He referred with pride to the fact that this union had extinguished party animosities in Ulster, and he often expressed a hope that the same spirit would prevail till there would be neither Conservative nor Repealer, neither Orangeman nor Ribbonman, but only one great united brotherhood.

This union of Saxon and Kelt filled the minds of the Tory landlords with terror and consternation. If the North would give up its bigotry and the South its desire for repeal, then the rights of an absentee aristocracy were in danger. Accordingly, some of them tried to stir up the old animosities of race and religion. To this Dr. M'Knight alluded at a meeting in Newtownards—

"I freely confess," said he, "that in matters of a purely religious character I would not give much for that man's moral integrity who would compromise the smallest religious obligation for any merely secular object; but, on the other hand, I have no language sufficiently strong to convey my reprobation and contempt for that policy which, under the

hypocrisy of theological profession, degrades Christianity into an engine of State intrigue. . . . . Parties have tried to break us up by arraying Protestants against Roman Catholics. and Orangemen against the industrial rights of both classes of their countrymen, in order that rack-renting and oppression and the extermination of the universal people may be still carried on through the agency of the people's own criminal divisions. In the North this base policy has been utterly unsuccessful, and the present glorious meeting in one of the most Presbyterian districts of Ulster is a triumphant demonstration of its failure."

The agitation soon assumed such proportions, that the Liberal Government of Lord John Russell promised a measure of reform. A Bill was introduced, but its provisions would have confiscated a great part of the farmers' property, and Dr. M'Knight went to London, as head of a deputation, to protest against the proposed enactment. He found Lord John Russell very apathetic regarding their claims, but, as the obnoxious Bill pleased nobody, it was withdrawn. Dr. M'Knight had more than one opportunity of explaining his opinions to Sir Robert Peel, the leader of the Conservative Opposition. That statesman had not until then been aware of the peculiar relations which existed between landlord and tenant in Ulster; but he gave the deputation a patient hearing, and even admitted that the agrarian agitation was founded on principles of justice. In fact, he expressed such broad views on the question as to lead Dr. M'Knight to believe that the Ulster farmers might rely upon his future assistance. But only a few days after the last of these interviews, Sir Robert's untimely death destroyed the expectations that had been raised.

Very soon internal difficulties arose in the work of the

League, which marred the harmony between North and South. One of the Southern leaders, Mr. Frederick Lucas, although by birth an Englishman and a Quaker, had become more Hibernian than the Irish, more "Roman" than the Catholics. This gentleman, with all the animosity of an apostate, began to make furious attacks on Protestantism in his newspaper, the *Tablet*. To crown all, several candidates came forward to support legislative independence rather than tenant-right. An address issued by Mr. Ryan to the electors of Limerick was termed by Dr. M'Knight in a letter to Duffy "A Furious Repeal Manifesto," yet Ryan had been adopted by the League as their candidate. This, the Doctor said, would destroy them in the North, and he hoped Duffy would get them out of the predicament. But notwithstanding this internal friction, the League for a time maintained an outward appearance of united action.

Parliament was dissolved in 1852, and as the franchise had been reduced so as to give it to those whose valuation was £12 in the counties and £8 in the boroughs, the tenant-right party determined to make a great effort to return representatives of their own. The Southern Leaguers offered to run Dr. M'Knight for Wexford; but, although his success would have been certain, he declined the honour, inasmuch as his editorial duties rendered it necessary for him to reside in Ireland.

In the South, the tenant-right party were generally successful; but in the North, although several gallant battles were fought, the "office" was too powerful, and not a single tenant-right candidate was returned, except Mr. William Kirk for Newry.

Before long internal divisions ruined the influence of the league and afterwards destroyed its existence. There was

the party of the North and the party of the South ; but even the South was not unanimous, for some, like Keogh and Sadlier, were willing to take office and work as ordinary Liberals, while others, like Duffy and Lucas, desired Repeal of the Union more than Tenant-right. The Northern Presbyterians could bear the attacks of Lucas on their religion, but they would not, even indirectly, give any help in the struggle for legislative independence. Thus the Southern desire for Repeal sundered the union of North and South and retarded the progress of reform. At a conference of the League, Dr. M'Knight accused Lucas of treachery to the cause, but a vote of confidence in what was called the independent party was carried. The Northern members then withdrew from the association, and carried on their own agitation as Liberals and Unionists. Although Dr. M'Knight now went on lines of his own, Sir Charles G. Duffy admits that nobody did so much to organize the tenant-right party in Ulster, or to maintain the unity between North and South.

Just then the cause of the farmers seemed hopeless in the North. The "Office" put on its tightest screw at every election. The tenant at will who voted for a Liberal candidate was almost certain of eviction without compensation. Accordingly the majority of electors, no matter how much they desired reform, feared to expose themselves to the loss of their farms and their homes. Besides, the "Office" officials, chiefly through the instrumentality of various political and religious organizations, persisted in accusing the Presbyterian tenant-righters of uniting with "Papists and Repealers." The result was that in many instances the more ignorant "Loyalists" were brought to believe that the very men who had left the League rather than encourage Repeal, were now in some mysterious way going to betray Protes-

tantism. Thus Dr. M'Knight had to contend with the apathy or ignorance of many in the North, with the influence of the Episcopal Church, and with the secret calumnies or open hostility of the "Office" and its satellites.*

Still Dr. M'Knight fought on with dauntless courage. Being as supreme in the field of argument as his opponents were at the polling booth, he formed a public opinion by educating the Presbyterian people. Gradually, more and more of the Ulster farmers began to look to him as their leader, and year by year the admiration of his followers for him grew stronger and stronger, till at length they regarded him as a second Moses, to lead them from bondage to liberty. Every week the *Standard* was anxiously expected, eagerly read, and passed round from farmer to farmer. When the editor had spoken on any subject that settled the matter conclusively. "It was true, Dr. M'Knight had said it." One man, in his enthusiasm, was heard to declare that he believed in nothing implicitly save the Bible and the *Derry Standard.*

Dr. M'Knight lived to see his own principles grow strong and become, at last, triumphant. The first indication of coming victory was in 1857, when Mr. S. M. Greer succeeded in carrying County Derry against all the power of landlordism. In 1868, after a hard struggle, Ulster sent in several tenant-right members; and next year was marked by the Disestablishment of the Episcopal Church.

The general feeling of admiration for Dr. M'Knight's

* The *Derry Journal*, in a very able critique on this sketch, has certainly made a point by contrasting the electoral independence of the Southern Kelt with that of the Northern Scot; but we must remember that the Scot had a much more valuable interest in the soil, and to him eviction without compensation would have been far more disastrous. Besides, the Northern Protestants, on account of their fears of Roman Catholicism, were not nearly so unanimous in desiring to support tenant-right candidates as were their Southern countrymen.

splendid talents, sterling honesty, unimpeachable integrity, kindness and gentleness in private life, and, above all, for his long services to the tenant farmers, caused his friends at length to present him with a testimonial. Professor Smyth acted as secretary for the committee, and more than £600 were raised as a mark of the respect in which the editor of the *Standard* was held all over Ulster. The Rev. Thomas Croskery stated at a meeting held to make the presentation, that he looked upon Dr. M'Knight as the greatest lay scholar in Ireland, whether he was regarded as a Biblical critic, a linguist, or a theologian. Professor Smyth added his testimony to the effect that he believed no other living man in Ulster had done more to leaven the community with right and liberal views on social and political questions. Indeed the Professor himself was a living example of the truth of this statement, for we have it on the authority of his nephew, Mr. M'Clure, that it was from the editor of the *Standard* he derived a great part of his knowledge of the different phases of the agrarian problem. Dr. M'Knight, in his reply, after thanking his friends for their kindness, stated that the origin of the agrarian and many of the political difficulties in Ireland arose from the extinction of the primitive Irish land system—a system which continued in force to a comparatively late period—and vested the ownership of the soil in the people and not in the territorial barons. The final remedy, he thought, would be peasant proprietorship.

In 1870 Mr. Gladstone's first Tenant-right Bill was brought before Parliament. Dr. M'Knight was consulted by the Government in a familiar and non-official way concerning the provisions of the proposed enactment. When it became law, he admitted that it was, with all its defects, more than he had previously expected.

The same Parliament passed a Ballot Act, which was an additional protection for the farmers, and which brought forth fruit in 1874, when Professor Smyth and so many other friends of the farmers were returned for Ulster constituencies.

But Dr. M'Knight's career was drawing to an end. In 1876 his strength began to decline rapidly, and in April he became very weak. As he lay on his death-bed, he asked an old Roman Catholic servant to repeat the Lord's Prayer in Irish. This she did as requested, and he corrected her mis-pronounciation of a word. Gradually he became weaker, and at last, on the 8th of June, 1876, trusting steadfastly in the merits of his Saviour, James M'Knight passed from time to eternity. His widow survived him for many years; but they had no issue.

Besides his leading articles and reviews he left but few literary remains except two or three pamphlets. The most important of these is "The Ulster Tenants Claim of Right," issued in 1848, which for sound argument and historic research has no equal on the subject in question.

Dr. M'Knight held both his religious and political opinions with great tenacity, and none dared attack him with impunity. Having a mind naturally logical, wielding a fluent pen, and possessed of a boundless store of learning, he was able to crush to pieces almost any opponent who ventured to meet him in the arena of controversy. But in these discussions he always dealt with principles and never attacked persons. In his whole career, I think he never had to defend a single action for libel.

Above all, his power was exhibited in the marvellous reviews that he published in the *Derry Standard*. He was master of everything he discussed. He seemed to be equally

at home in either Greek particles, Hebrew roots, German metaphysics, or modern theology. He was a splendid Keltic scholar, and had read everything dealing with the early history of his country. Hence it came to pass that he was able to analyse every new work that appeared on the lines of his studies, in a manner that is very seldom done by any newspaper editor.

He left no successor among Northern journalists. Among them he alone was "The Grand Old Man of Ulster," whom Presbyterian farmers regarded as their leader and prophet, and whom they followed till they saw the sun of freedom arise over the rugged hills of their native land.

# APPENDIX.

DR. DICKSON'S father and mother—John Dickson and Jane Steel—were married on the 6th of December, 1743, but any person examining the register in a careless manner would consider that the date was a year later, as "1744" is evidently written out of its proper place.

The house in which the Society of United Irishmen was formed is now known as the Bambridge Hotel.

REV. WILLIAM CAMPBELL, D.D.

In preparing these biographies I have got several very important facts from Dr. Campbell's MS. History of the Irish Presbyterians. Dr. Campbell was born in Newry. He was licensed to preach in 1750, and afterwards went abroad with Mr. Bagwell's family, of Clonmel. In 1759 he was ordained to the pastoral charge of the Non-subscribing Congregation of Antrim, and, in 1764, he was installed minister of the Synod of Ulster Congregation in Armagh. In 1789 he removed to Clonmel, where he remained till his death in 1805. He wrote several works that were published during his life-time, and he left in manuscript, "Sketches of the History of Presbyterians in Ireland." This valuable document is now in the possession of John Gordon, Esq., Belfast, whom I have to thank for his kindness in permitting me to examine it.

Dr. Campbell was a gentleman of the most undoubted loyalty, and so strongly attached to Protestant principles that he suffered imprisonment in France for refusing to kneel in the street when he "accidentally met the host borne in solemn procession." But notwithstanding his firm attachment to Protestantism, he strongly denounces the cruelty and injustice with which Ireland was governed during the latter part of the last century. The following are a few extracts :—

"In the beginning of the new administration under Lord Camden, the friends of Parliamentary reform and Catholic Emancipation held

*public* meetings, according to ancient custom, for the purpose of instructing their representatives in Parliament. Such meetings had been held *constitutional*, now they were a *crime*. Being prevented from meeting publicly, they held *private* meetings to form a bond of *union* and a harmony of affection, in support of Parliamentary reform and Catholic Emancipation. But *union* was a crime. An oath of secrecy was added. This was made a felony of death, though the object of the oath was virtuous and laudable, and highly conducive to the welfare and happiness of the kingdom.

UNITED IRISHMEN was thus perverted into a term of the highest malignity, importing every wickedness—rebellion, treason, and a conspiracy with the enemy to overturn the constitution . . . . The popular newspapers must be destroyed. But that was not enough, the peace of the kingdom must be destroyed. Belfast was then assaulted by the army, without any previous notice or pretence, or any appearance of reason: the dragoons rushing along the streets with swords drawn, so that it looked like a place taken by storm rather than a commercial town, which the minute before was full of business and in the most profound tranquillity . . . . It was the principal town in the North. The inhabitants in general were *Presbyterians*, and it was considered the head of that great body . . . . Their Whig principles were hateful—they must feel the vengeance of the Ministry. The riots must be kept up; and, to play a sure game, Government took the lead, and became the principal rioters. The military were the actors in those scenes of horror and devastation, unknown in Ireland since the dreadful desolations in the reign of James the Second.

*Defenders* were now no longer necessary. They had acted their part, and the horrid purpose of those that patronised them was assured: they were given up to destruction: and their former patrons exulted in being their executioners. Such was the fate of these wretched, deluded men, entrapped by the base artifices of a ruthless tyranny: engendered, as is not doubted, in another kingdom, and greedily pursued by Tories and high Churchmen in our own. *Things were now ripe;* and in that same County of Armagh, the Tories, who had encouraged and protected the Defenders, as soon as Government changed their conduct, they changed also, and became the bitter

persecutors of their former friends, destroying their property, burning their houses, and driving into banishment several hundred of their families.

1797.—Mr. Thomas Birch, minister of Saintfield, in County Down, was arrested on a charge of treason, and brought to trial, at the Summer Assizes of that year, in Downpatrick. Mr. Justice Chamberlain, who presided in court, expressed, in the strongest terms, his indignation at the base, malicious conduct of the prosecutor. The *worthy* rector of the parish, however, gave his testimony in favour of this profligate man, whom the judge represented in the light of an insidious, willing *assassin*. But this infamous man had the merit not only of being an informer, but a *Conformist* also, which must have exalted him highly in the opinion of good Churchmen. Mr. Birch was honourably acquitted.

Presbyterians went in thousands to America, and if ships had been found, thousands more would have sought a peaceful asylum in that land of *liberty*—a happy refuge from the despotism of England—far removed from the violence of her satellites and *legal* assassins. . . .

As to the rebellion that was raised in Ulster in 1798, it was the act not of the body of Presbyterians, but only of a part, made mad by unexampled oppression, which appeared to have been contrived by the prevalent faction, on purpose to raise a rebellion and take occasion from thence to ruin the nation and make way for the Union. . . . . .

Mr. Porter, minister of Greyabbey, was put to death. The place destined for his execution was at his meeting-house. By choosing that place, where he had been so often attended by crowds who admired his eloquence and his worth, it was intended to add insult to the bitterness of death, and to display the triumph of persecution and bigotry. Different stories were circulated to justify this murder; but the most probable cause, besides his being a Presbyterian minister, was the wit and humour with which, in several publications, he exposed the infamous conduct of magistrates and informers."

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## THE CHARLEMONT CORRESPONDENCE.

The following extracts from letters written to Lord Charlemont by some of his correspondents, throw a very strong light on the state of

affairs in Ulster, and especially on the tyranny of the Government during this disastrous period:—

"1792, June 26, Belfast.—Seals were once protection to letters; not so now, any more than candles are to our windows, when illuminations have been imperiously commanded, and that to an extent never before practised. . . . Mr. C. Greg's hospitable house is a complete ruin. . . . Our good General Lake kindly had ordered the retreat or tattoo to be beat at the early hour of eleven; but I heard many of the said mob swear they did not regard the drums, and would retire when they thought fit. Indeed, most of them were so drunk as probably not to know either what the drums said or themselves. To their immortal honour, our yeomen infantry (so styled by a curious figure of speech, for there is not a yeoman among them) were distinguished by their zeal. Their commanders, very good men and true, have, like Fortinbras in the play, 'Shark'd up a list of landless resolutes.'"

DR. HALIDAY.

"7th August, 1792.—No United Irishman, save one, will now visit our Whig Club. Thank God, we have but five of that fraternity, and all of this town, but a general coolness seems to have pervaded our country members."

DR HALIDAY.

"You have heard of the 'muck' which was run in this town on Saturday [9th March, 1793], by these more than savages, his Majesty's light dragoons. The wretched Indian, rendered mad by arrack and the loss of his all at play, draws his bric and kills and wounds all he meets in his race, till he is knocked on the head. Our doughty assailants, without having either of these excuses, at an early hour, and a very short time after they had marched in, sober from everything but unprovoked rage, sally forth with their drawn sabres, and cut and slash indiscriminately all they meet, wounding several, among them some of our respectable and quiet townsmen (I must not call them citizens); and a spirited magistrate striving to protect defenceless people by restoring order while the streets were filled with cries of terror; and this from no sudden impulse of fury, for they had determined on the exploit many days before they left Lisburn, where, it is said, it had been whispered to them to spare neither carcase nor limb."

13th March, 1793. DR. HALIDAY.

"In fact the lower class on each side hates the other cordially, in spite of the endeavours of their leaders."

3rd August, 1794. REV. EDWARD HUDSON.

"Our amiable friend Robert [Robert Stewart, afterwards Viscount Castlereagh], set out ten days ago, in compliance with the minister's circular letter. I took the liberty, at our last conference, of suggesting to him the delicacy and difficulty of his situation. This, with his usual candour, he took in very good part; but it will have no effect. He is Pitt-ized with a vengeance, which he candidly owns."

August, 1794. DR. HALIDAY.

"It seems to be fated that this beautiful and inestimable constitution should be again destroyed by Presbyterians and Scotchmen."

7th Nov., 1794. EDMUND MALONE.

"I think it my duty to acquaint your Lordship that Mr. Allen M'Donnell, a respectable Roman Catholic tenant on your Lordship's estate, in the townland of Drumnaferin [near Castlecaulfield], has offered to bring forward, when required, at a few days' notice, two hundred of the Roman Catholic inhabitants of this neighbourhood, able and willing to carry arms and march against the common enemy in defence and support of his Majesty's person and Government."

11th Jan., 1797. COL. LINDSAY.

"Reform and intimidation were the chief recruiting sergeants for the societies. But, my Lord, Government itself is lending them another by establishing a system of mere coercion, without any mixture of conciliation."

9th May, 1797. REV. EDWARD HUDSON.

"We have at length seen the close of a tedious and sanguinary north-west circuit. I saw a letter from Dundalk mentioning that the judges, my very good and worthy friends Chamberlain and Lord Yelverton—(you see what a Democrat I am by the order in which I place them) were much delighted with the result. They had capitally sentenced twenty-seven. Sportsmen usually boast of the number of pieces they have killed. But what, I suppose, gave them most satisfaction was their finding, throughout, the juries very trustworthy and disposed to do their duty. . . .

It is true three yeomen have been sentenced for two horrid murders, but they have not yet suffered, and are recommended to mercy, while every exertion has been made by most respectable people, and on strong grounds, to save one [William] Orr, or to obtain a mitigation of his punishment, notwithstanding which he will, I believe, be hanged to-morrow at Carrickfergus, leaving behind him a character without reproach (except for this one offence of tendering the 'United' oath, which, there is good reason to think, he did not do, though he certainly was present, to two 'Fencibles'), a heartbroken wife, and six helpless children. Our dear Countess [Lady Londonderry] has done all it was possible for her to do, but, as it appears at present, with as little success as the rest. [William Orr was hanged on the 14th of October, 1797. 'Remember Orr' was long a watchword with the Ulster patriots]."

6th October, 1797. DR. HALIDAY.

"Yesterday they [the Yeomen] came within four miles of Armagh, ransacked the houses in Tassagh, struck and abused the people, and carried away the firelocks from the bleach-yards, which were kept for the watchmen for protection of the bleach greens, and generally assaulted the inhabitants."

8th November, 1797. ROBERT LIVINGSTON.

"I have reason to think that the minister is determined to continue the system of terror in Ireland, though it is very obvious that he sees the growing difficulties here, and is uneasy about them. I fear that he thinks a convulsion in Ireland might be useful in distracting attention from his failures and his mismanagement of our resources."

25th March, 1798. EARL OF MOIRA.

"Your old Ballymascanlan [Co. Louth] Volunteers, who six months ago were almost all United Irishmen, are now complete Orangemen, which is more congenial with their feelings. . . . In speaking of the astonishing increase of Orangeism, I forgot to mention the most wonderful part of it, that immense numbers of them are in Belfast."

May 29, 1798. REV. EDWARD HUDSON.

"Even Newtownards, the head-quarters of severity (a priest sat there as judge advocate), exhibits a sullen acquiescence with the new absurd system of mercy and humanity. Passing through on Saturday I took notice that the gallows was struck, after suspending no more than a beggerly dozen."

8th August, 1798. DR. HALIDAY.

"That part of Derry which is next me was for two days vibrating between rise and no rise, and was at last deterred by want of a leader and by failure of a partial rising near Maghera."

20th Aug., 1798. REV. E. HUDSON.

Alexander Henry Haliday, M.D.—son of the Rev. Samuel Haliday—was a celebrated Belfast physician.

The Rev. Edward Hudson—rector of Ahoghill—resided at Portglenone. Both he and Dr. Halliday were regular correspondents of Lord Charlemont.

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